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MANORDEAN.

A NOVEL.

BY

HERBERT STEELE.

2.50 - b. 119.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY,

WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

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were, out of your way, through a pretty vale looking like a gentle ravine. In autumn, the apple trees sent their perfume along the footway; and in winter, the bared trees of the near hill gave one a glimpse of the faint fine blue of the far mountains —fairy-like in their fading unsubstantial beauty. Within your grasp, as you sat on the coach, were the apple-tree branches. Within hearing, hid by the road-side narrow wood, ran the River Eskill—some miles further, a dark stream floating ships, and slowly streaming by large houses; but here a sportive rivulet, fond of leaping over fallen tree trunks, and making great foam when it got into contest with sharp stubborn rocks. It made sweet music for tired travellers. They saw it not—but its gurgling sound echoed cheerfully in winter as in summer among the apple trees. Then the road advanced into a more open

country. Hedges, neither well kept nor trim, but vividly green in summer, skirted the road to the right; but from the left, sloped up a wide upland of pasture land, gently broken here and there into swelling mounds and shallow dells, and crowned irregularly by many-formed battalions of elm and fir. One company of sentinel trees deployed along the summit, in Indian file, and through their separated trunks the bits of blue sky looked as if they were "painted in." Others clustered together as if in fear, and were huddled close in undignified irregularity. Others stood like a group of warriors holding a council—separated in trunk and at top—and as the breeze played, nodding their plumes. Then there were groups drawn up in battle-array with wings, outposts, and videttes; and some stood alone in solitary state. Around this upland, wound

the road; and the eye of the traveller still rested on its scattered groves, as the turret and spire of Manordean Church rose from out the ground. As a back-ground to the church, appeared Hendon-hill. On a clear summer day, each variety of verdure—each separate kind of heath—each black, white, grey, or brown rock—each large brown farm-house—each white cottage wall—each bounded pasture plot, or wide corn field stood out as in a panorama, and seemed an open amphitheatre of natural "spectacle."

It seemed as if some poet had loved Manordean, and wishing for it the happiest union of scenery, had his prayer granted by nature, ever partial to its darlings. Hendon, in fact, was a picture-gallery for Manordean, and also, a curtain or screen, sheltering its clustering cottages from the eastern gales.

Manordean merited the protection and partiality. If some of its cottages were awkward-looking—in fact, ugly—they had the good taste to know it, and they hid themselves behind hedge-rows and orchard trees. Nearly every respectable house in the village was isolated, yet all seemed linked together by one thread of rural beauty; for nestling at the foot of Hendon, and keeping near the banks of the winding Eskill, and all encircled by open air and fresh green fields the many houses seemed like one family. The trees of one demense clasped, spite of boundary-hedges, the outstretched friendly branches of another. The same stream that had just watered the village parson's orchard, now ran through the village doctor's lawn. The little ravine which sheltered the flower-garden of the three Miss Pennant's, contained at the other end the arboured

summer-house, which the united ingenuity of the four young men at Mrs. Smith's had constructed; and the two territories met in a very shady little nook, which the Miss Pennants were very fond of examining, and in which, by a strange coincidence, the young men at Mrs. Smith's (her nephews) took a daily interest. Manordean was thus a model village, a family group of friendly houses and affectionate demesnes.

The Spirit of the Mountain, the Genius of Hendon-hill, "a rich and generous Giver," gave to it the flowing Eskill, loved by old and young. The Manordeanite could not but love the Eskill; the memory of his boyish sports was made more vivid in after years by the recollections of its many-formed banks—some of smooth sloping green, some crowned with willow, some rocky with tiny cliffs, some bright with

flanting yellow furze. In after years through the recollection of each sweetest scene, and side by side with each deepest memory, flowed the ever fresh and well-loved stream. Who in Manordean could refuse to love it? It sprang to light up far on Hendon, with a little tiny jet, in infant brightness. It ran on for a score yards, and then met a stubborn bank, which even in its young strength, it made much way against; though, with all its brave battling, it was much diverted from its right path. Then, fresh from the fight, it flowed on steadily; and was kissed in the open meadow by the loving sun; and long tall rushes bent down and were glad to be saluted by its cool refreshing lips. Then it met with adversity, for rock after rock had to be met and overcome, or overpassed or evaded. Some stubborn giants remained immovable in the centre of its bed, and the

poor little stream fretted itself, and its clear lips foamed with a pretty passion, and its tiny voice shouted defiance at the calm stone. But it was worsted and was forced to pass on, and it took revenge on several small pebbles, pushing them along with unnecessary violence, so that even the shapest of them were obliged to come round. Then it came to a sloping, furze-grown common, and pausing for a moment at the top, to take breath, it ran down the mountain with such smooth quick speed that the sun had hardly time to glitter on its whirled waves. Such a rapid race! The dark stupid mosses were quite bewildered as it ran past, and could not tell what to make of such a wild dashing young rivulet that sprinkled them so plentifully in passing. And the poor pebbles, even with their hearts of stone, trembled to feel themselves dashed down and whirled along

without even time to pick up the slightest acquaintance or intimacy with the affectionate bits of clay that fain would cling to them. But, again, the stream got sedate. The race is now over—as it walks leisurely along, giving the pebbles a rest, and cooling itself in little sheltered nooks, and only now and then giving a gurgle, as some refractory pebble wont move on. But the great event is to come off. Slowly comes our little stream to the field of its great achievement. It nears the summit of a cliff—shrinks back in a little circuit, as if preparing for a spring, and then dashes down, with a gallant bound, of four feet! its sparkling spray haloing it with a liquid glory. That is a a waterfall indeed! How elate and excited the little Eskill is after it! And then, almost immediately, either to cool its heated brow or to seek retirement, that it may repose on its laurels, it makes

a quick sudden dart into an impenetrable ravine, where it has all sorts of suspicious amusement—idling away valuable time playing with white smooth-faced rocks—carrying on flirtations with young hazel trees, and doing several other deeds, surely evil, for they shun the light. But at last it comes out with a demure, staid, smooth face, and rolls on, respectably and quietly, towards sweet Manordean. Who did not love the little Eskill? By how many cottage chambers did it not murmur in the evening, soothing poor Lizzy Pennant's troubled pillow, as she feared and fancied that clever Laura Smith had been walking that evening up the Hendon-road with young Lewis—and that Lewis might not call in the morning! And as the poor widow, in the little cottage by Melton Gate heard it sing its evening carol, unconsciously it brought peace to her—it seemed

like *his* voice—for long ago the well-loved tones had mingled with this gentle music. And to other hearts it came like a pastoral poem recited in the dusk by some voice lingering on the words. And to others, toil-worn and faint-hearted, it came like a promise of a world where rest is not sin, nor lovingness a curse. But the blessings of that little stream were innumerable. It gave many in Manordean something to talk about. It was reported at three or four tea-tables that Russell Elton, who was to leave for London in a year, had written verses on it in Miss Meandale's album, beginning,

"Eskill! bright—like blushing bride!"

Middle-aged Mr. Juveneau (who had held a very high position in the Mecklenburg Seidlitz Engineer Corps under the special command of his Serene Highness

himself) had made himself "a lion" in Manordean, for three months, by exhibiting plans showing how the Eskill might be made navigable up to Manordean, and with what ease he, Mr. Juveneau, "could throw a bridge," an Atlas-like feat, over the stream at the junction of the parishes of Manordean and Horslarge. Strangers impertinently called it "a pretty trout stream;" but their was a flippant appreciation in which strangers only could indulge.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Rochford, a London merchant, was one of the principal people in Manordean. But he was hardly a resident until, after the death of his wife, he broke up his London establishment and sent his two daughters down to Manordean, to make Melton House their home.

After one of the long coach journeys of these days the young girls—Mary being then nineteen and Amy seventeen—arrived at Manordean much wearied. But then

they had the house to themselves, and their father was absent. In a few days they made themselves most comfortable. Their mother's piano was uncovered and brought forward from the dingy obscurity of the drawing-room corner. Better things were in store for them. Mrs. Jordan, an old friend of their mother's, paid them a visit—and spoke fluently of invitations—and evenings out—and morning walks—and parties—and village balls—at such a rate that Amy did not sleep for two nights, and even Mary was heard to say "she did not know what to think." In a few weeks, friendly relations were established with all the Manordean magnates. The St. Legers, the Philipses, the Grays, the Hetheringtons, the Maplesons, Mrs. Smith and her four nephews, the three Miss Pennants, and others, all called on them, and the course of evening assemblies under various vague

names, went swimmingly on. Amy revelled in the excitement. At all the evening parties she was an inevitable apparition, in her white dress, dark hair, and liquid lustrous dark eyes. The four Smiths talked of no one else, and even the three Miss Pennants were unanimous in praising her. She actually "lightened over" Manordean. Her presence gladdened every rout and revel; and her laughing voice was heard twenty times a day; in parlours, boudoirs, and drawing rooms; up Hendon road, the inevitable promenade of the Manordeanites; and down by the Eskill, until some weak-minded residents began to falter in their allegiance to the sovereign stream, and began to doubt whether Amy Rochford or the Eskill, were the more essential attraction at Manordean.

Amy's *debut* into village society took place in May. It was two months after,

and in an upper room of Melton House the two girls were hastily dressing for an evening assembly, one of the best of the season, at Mrs. Phillips'. Rich and ringing rose Amy's voice, as she called now for this ribbon, now for some pins, now for a moment's advice from Mary, as to a novel and daring style of hair-dressing; and many a glance at the tempting mirror, as it gratefully reflected back in its native prettiness the sweet face that threw away many a bright smile on the senseless glass. (What would Adolphus Smith have given for one of those smiles?) As usual, Amy had delayed dressing till within a few minutes of the intended hour for setting out: and now everything was to be done in a hurry, and nothing could be done with care. But that little vexed Amy. Who with such rich abundant hair, would care to spend more than a few minutes in arranging it?

Or what needed cautious inspection of a face, the very shadows of which were bright—the most ordinary parts of which shone happily in a smile which beamed over all in one soft sunshine?

Suddenly Mary stopped as she was speaking, and paused to listen—there were wheels on the gravelled avenue—then, repeated knocks at the hall-door echoed through the house, and in a few moments the comer was admitted; a few more, and the flurried housemaid entered with, "The Master is come, Miss." "My father!" said Mary faintly. Amy looked unutterable impatience, and the immediate results of the coming events came to her thoughts in a moment. She glanced at her bright ball-dress, and smiled bitterly at her own disappointment. Quietly Mary put off a light evening dress, and in a few moments was again arrayed in her quiet every-day

apparel. "Tell my father I am coming down," she said in her usual quiet voice. The servant disappeared. "No party to-night, I suppose," said Amy, drawing a long breath.

"I fear not, Amy."

Mr. Rochford had come to stay in Manordean for some months. Independently of the pleasure he interrupted the evening of his arrival, he came in time to spoil Amy's brightest anticipation. *The* ball of the season—for Manordean as well as London, had its "season,"—was that notified by Mrs. Jordan and her two daughters. It was not to be the largest, but in elegance it was to have no superior. Miss Jordan had been a month—a whole month, in London, and Mrs. Jordan had a natural tendency to "the genteel." Mary and Amy had received invitations, but it was more than doubtful whether their father

would consent to an acceptance. So Mary undertook to open negociations. This was to be done with due caution and appropriate fear.

They drank tea one evening with their father in the parlour. As he took his first cup, Mary was about to begin, when she stopped short, as she imagined the book her father read must have been unpleasant, as at that moment a frown passed over his firm face. Then when he reached out his hand for the second cup, she thought it a good opportunity, but she got nervous—and the half-uttered first word died on her lips, and she smothered it with a cough. In a few moments her father rose to go away. Now or never! How Amy trembled with impatience and nervous fear!

"Father —"

"Yes," uttered the father in a short surprised tone.

"Amy and I, Sir, are asked to a party at Mrs. Jordan's, for Thursday."

"Well?"

"May we go, Sir?"

"Certainly not."

Amy heaved a quick sigh. Her father looked up and as he caught the expression of her face his keen look grew keener. There was a painful pause, and then on went Mr. Rochford in his usual calm cold accents:—"You have had too much pleasure of late; when Amy went last to her aunt's, she went to the Grays unknown to me, Mr. Gray told me so."

"I was but asked on the very evening of the party," quickly replied Amy, in an apologetic tone—"and I had not time to ask your leave—and I thought you would not object to my knowing the Grays."

"I do not object—but I do object to too much excitement."

"This party at Mrs. Jordan's will be very select; and it is to be over early. And all the respectable families of Manordean will be there;" quickly ran on Amy. Her father was silent. So, taking sudden courage, she went on. "I'm sure none in Manordean go out less than we do. We are shut up in this old house, from summer to spring, except for a few evenings, and when you are here we never see any one. But—" with a quick gasping cough, "I do not mean to grumble, I was only asking you, Sir, to let us go to this one party, and if you would but ask us to do anything for you, or teach us how to make you happy; I am sure Mary and I would do anything. And this party," still went on the breathless Amy, "will be so pleasant and quiet, and it will be no expense to you, Sir, for I do not want a new dress—and aunt will give me everything else I do

want. Do please, father, let us go!"

Mr. Rochford's face was in the shade cast by the window-curtain, and Amy could not see how the unwonted boldness of her appeal was taken. She thought, however, that his silence indicated that at least he was not displeased. She left her chair and stood near him.

"Sit down!" said Mr. Rochford sternly. "You are very unladylike, and very forward, to speak such a ridiculous speech. What new stage tricks are these? Have you learned them from young Gray, who is going as a strolling player—and who, I am told was a constant companion of yours—"

"I never spoke five words to him!" cried Amy, in one passionate breath.

The cold grey eye of Mr. Rochford shot out a spark of exultation.

"Ah! now Miss Amy," he said, very slowly, and very keenly, "the mask is

thrown aside. You are no longer the whining actress. Who taught you to repeat those affecting passages? In what new novel did you find them?"

Bitter tears gushed out as poor Amy sunk back in her chair. She had spoken each word of kindness and love from her very heart. To have heard one word of answering friendliness at that moment, would have been more than rapture—but oh! how sharp and sickening fell this cold scorn! She burned with hate against some one—against something—she did not dare to think even to herself—against her father. She would have given her life to repel this scorn with coldness; but the tears gushed out, vexing her as they flowed.

"So, you tire of this life," continued Mr. Rochford, still slowly and coldly, as he paced up and down the room, "*shut up in this old house from summer to spring.*" I

am sure I am very sorry for your sake that my means do not allow me to afford you a better mansion, and that my disposition does not lead me to like society. But surely an independent young lady, such as you, a clever young lady, too, who can speak so well and so appropriately, cannot be at a loss for a more fitting home. Among your many attentive admirers, some might be generous enough to place a gay cottage at your disposal, in return for your many civilities—"

"Oh! father, don't, please," cried Mary, as Amy stifled her sobs with a heaving sound of pain. "She is not well."

"She was quite well, now, and she would be well enough to go out. You spoke too," he continued, "of doing anything to make me happy. I have some bills to meet on the fourth of this month—perhaps, in your generosity, you could pay them. And you

want 'no new dress,' this party will be 'no expense' to me. Indeed! Your own property will pay it I suppose, or perhaps young Graydon may defray your expenses."

"Mr. Graydon is a gentleman, and has the feelings of a gentleman, and I respect him!" uttered Amy, in one defiant breath.

"I am sure of it. But allow me to give you one advice," said Mr. Rochford, stopping in his walk, and for the first time speaking with a fierce tone, though still low, and an angry brow. "If you wish for pleasures, you must earn them—you must work for them. If in this house you spend dull evenings, it is because you spend idle days. I have no wish to make *my* industry reap rewards for *your* idleness. You shall not go to this party. If you have a proud spirit, indulge it, but do not attempt one day haughty indifference, and the next a whine of affected love."

Mr. Rochford spoke well and fluently. He thought so, and prided himself on it. But one kind look would have subdued his sobbing child better than the most irresistible logic or elaborate argument.

CHAPTER III.

The next day Amy burst into the room where her sister sat quietly knitting.

"Mary, I have it, I'll go and see Aunt."

"Aunt! Well?"

"Oh! she can do anything with my father—I cannot stay away from this party —I feel as if I must go to it."

"What nonsense!"

"It is no nonsense—I never felt so about any party before."

Mary laughed. "Why you were as much excited last month—"

"Excited—that's a different thing, but now I feel as if—as if something were going to happen. Very well, you laugh at me—we shall see. And if we go to the party, you will enjoy it in your quiet way, quite as much as I."

"Certainly, I hope, but the trouble—the struggle for it—it is not worth it."

"Perhaps not to you."

"You will think so too when it is over."

"Of course, when it *is* over."

"Because you over-excite yourself."

"I can't help it," and her eyes lighted up, "I love excitement, but I do not excite myself. It is the dancing—the music—the touches of hands—the lights—the meeting people's eyes—listening to songs, or singing them—all this gives me such spirit. I feel my voice inwardly tremble as I speak in a ball-room. I am entirely a different person from what I am here

with no one but you to speak to, and nothing to look at but that old avenue and this—this wretched rain."

"Yes," rejoined the elder sister after a pause. "But excitement must seem so strange to persons that don't know you."

"But," replied Amy, quickly, "You do not mean to say I *look* excited when in a ball-room?"

"No, you conceal it very well; but *I* can detect it in the uncertain light of your eye. So may others."

"Never. No one ever shall know me as well as you do. The most favoured lover shall never have me so much in his power. While my pulse is high with joy I will talk and look; oh! such a calm, cold look, as I can give when I like."

"Some one may see through your mask against your will."

"Let him try. I will drop one mask and have another inside."

"When you were talking to Mr. Forsythe, the other evening, did you wear a mask?"

Amy looked a little puzzled as she paused.

"Candidly, I cannot say. As I was introduced to him, I certainly put on the mask. I had heard he was proud and clever, and I vowed to make him bend. But, then, he is intelligent, and one likes to speak to him; for I think, like Shakspere's Egyptian, 'he can almost read the thoughts of people.' I think I wore no mask when we had conversed some time. Everything came natural to me, and I forgot all my designs, and good words, and good topics. I wonder will Mrs. Jordan ask him."

"She does not know him I believe. But that reminds me, Amy, of you and Merle Graydon; you are not behaving well to him."

"What is Merle Graydon to me?" said Amy, turning round sharply, with a little red spot in her cheek.

"I don't know, but I believe he loves you."

"Well, can I help that?"

"Amy, you should not fly out so, I only meant—"

"I beg your pardon Mary, I do not mean to say anything sharp to you, nor to say anything harsh of Merle Graydon, but, he never told me he loved me—and I do not think I could ever love him."

"But you know he loves you, tell the truth Amy."

"You stupid girl—"

"You know he loves you," repeated Mary, looking steadily at Amy.

"Why does he not fall in love with you?" and Amy put her arm round her

sister's waist, "he would be much better for you than Unthank."

"I wish," rejoined her sister quietly, "you would not speak of Henry Unthank at all Amy; you cannot appreciate him."

"He's very stupid though."

Mary looked grave, and put Amy's hand away.

"There's no use in talking to you, Amy."

"Yes there is—what shall I do?"

"Last month you walked out nearly every day with Merle Graydon."

"Why, he is our cousin."

"You liked him—he lent you books—every one thought you lovers, and then because this Mr. Forsythe comes, you give up Merle's company and talk of nothing but Forsythe, and all he says about poetry and science. People will think it very strange, and Merle is very much pained."

"How can I help it? Merle Graydon is a very good quiet gentleman, and intelligent too, and I have passed many pleasant hours with him—and I love him as a cousin."

"At least you should not make yourself remarkable with Forsythe; he is always with you when you go out."

"*Make myself remarkable*—you talk like an old maid. Forsythe is *not* always with me."

"Do you remember the evening last month at Fernwood?"

"Yes."

"Forsythe was speaking to you for two hours in the garden, and you were listening quietly, almost without uttering a word."

"Yes; he does tell one such strange things about geology and fossil remains. It is like poetry. His gestures are awkward, and his voice is harsh at first.—"

"At first?"

"Yes," continued Amy. "When he goes on for some time I quite forget all that, specially when he is speaking to me. I noted this well, for when that foolish Miss Mapleson came up and said something about dancing, his voice became again quite creaking and loud; and then as she went away, and he went on telling me how the world looked long, long ago, I never thought of his voice, but saw before me a picture, with strange stiff cliffs—and dark black seas—and wild fierce beasts, wading amid immense rivers and large quiet lakes. I made a sketch of it when I came home."

Amy paused.

"But what is the use of explaining to you. You never read poetry—you cannot understand Forsythe."

"I sometimes cannot understand what Forsythe says, but I think I can under-

stand both his character and that of Merle Graydon.

"I cannot imaggine myself Merle Graydon's wife; the idea of rapturous love associated with a young man who wears comfortable gaiters."

Mary did not smile but went on. "You know what Merle Graydon has done for his father and brothers. I think that kind of work is more noble than anything in your books of poetry."

"Yes, he is a very noble-hearted fellow."

"And what do you know of Mr. Forsythe? All we know is that he has lodgings at Mrs. Mason's,—that he pays his rent, and spends nearly all day reading and smoking a long Turkish pipe, and then strolls out in the evening, walking and talking, up the Hendon road with Laura Smith."

"Laura Smith! who told you that?"

Mary laughed, and Amy who had spoken quickly and whose cheek flushed up, turned abruptly away, with "I must start at once —now for a good walk."

"Shall you want me?" asked Mary, as Amy rose.

"Yes—come and help me to dress. I must have everything first-rate to please my aunt, for succeed I must. What fun we shall have! In the new dress I shall look so well, and you can dress my hair in your new way. Come now, you will be as glad as I, but you are so quiet you never say so."

"I *will* be very glad."

"That's a good girl! Do you know, Mary," said Amy, abruptly stopping on the stairway, as both went up to their room, "I always enjoy myself better when you are with me. To be sure you do sit so sedately among old ladies, dancing only three

or four times, that one would think you dull. But I catch you looking at me sometimes with a happy look—and then I dance with such spirit! Or you look so joyful when Unthank is talking to you! "Ah! I'm almost wild with joy. Come, quick now! This old aunt must be coaxed and coaxed—until she writes *such* a letter to my father!"

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Rochford and Miss Wormleighton the aunt to whom Amy's mission was directed, had been sisters. Miss Wormleighton had opposed the match, and was never on very good terms with the family while her sister lived. But shortly after his wife's death, Mr. Rochford called on the sharp spinster, patiently heard himself attacked in most bitter style, told Miss Wormleighton of some very great difficulties he

was in, and departed. On the next morning he got a note from her, enclosing a cheque for one hundred pounds, to be repaid she said, with interest at six per cent., and if not, she would, without the slightest pity, put him into prison, and perhaps get him transported—the old lady's ideas of distinction between criminal and civil jurisdiction not being exactly accurate. The sharp ratings he got from her, and such sharp notes did not prevent Mr. Rochford paying such visits occasionally; and Amy, who never could conceive her cold stern father aught but marble, might have been surprised to watch his mild patient air, as he suffered his sister-in-law to scold him for an hour, and then tell him to leave her, "he was taking up her time by talking—always talking." Mr. Rochford was a proud man; but, as Miss Wormleighton must now have

known, though she never seemed to know it, was no longer a rich man. The influence their aunt had acquired could not, however, be long concealed from the girls. They soon saw how readily their father assented to their paying visits to Hillerslie (their aunt's country lodge, within a mile and a half of Manordean), and Amy in particular had guessed that something more than mere love kept her father on good terms with the spinster, childless owner of an interesting account with the banking firm of Mathers, Gully, and Seed, in "the city."

From the time that Miss Wormleighton had been on intimate and friendly terms with her neices, Amy had been the favorite. There was something in the unfailing liveliness, quick apprehension, and child-like confidence of the young girl that won the heart of the old lady. She liked nothing

better than sitting in her high-backed chair, listening gladly to Amy's impressions of life; calling her "a little fool," or "child!" or saying "nonsense!" every five minutes. It was such a fine foil for Miss Wormleighton's wisdom—such a fine opportunity for exposing the utter illogical absurdity of everything Amy advanced; for Amy never reasoned, but defended her impulsive sayings with the most unreasonable absurdities, giving Miss Wormleighton ample occupation in refuting them. Amy never concealed anything from her aunt. After every party the old high-backed chair became a confessional, and there sat the pretty, but by no means penitent little sinner, telling what she thought of every one, and uttering a great deal of uncharitable words. Her aunt always protested that she was "a perfect pest," that she "never stopped talking;" but this never

daunted Amy; and well she seemed to know, as if by instinct, that much dissatisfied would the old lady be if the morning's outpourings were even once omitted. Miss Wormleighton liked also to look at Amy. For age enfeebled and unbeautified, youth, gifted with beauty and animation, has a singular charm. It was quite a pleasure to the old aunt to rest her small, thin, withered hand on Amy's rounded shoulder, or to smooth off the long ringlets, and feel the pleasant touch of the perfect forehead. Pleasant to her to watch the large liquid light of the eyes; it seemed as if her almost exhausted little eyelets were drinking in fresh life from the young richness of Amy's. And Amy's voice was also pleasant; it sounded full and firm as if you could rest something on it; you could rely on its utterance as you could on a deed done; but then, it had a musical fickleness in it that made the ear follow its

changing, as shifting sunshine attracts the eye. Amy was to her aunt something actually refreshing and invigorating. There was so much superfluous life—so much excess of animated energy—so little leaven of self-seeking—so little thought of the presence of others—so much utterance of expression, "expansive, not appealing;" that, even to those less needing new life and fresh associations than the old spinster. Amy seemed to bring a living light with her unto the room.

CHAPTER V.

God be thanked for the sunshine! With what a glory it shines on that village bridge—on those spreading oaks—on the long dusty road, with its green borderings —on the straggling houses of the village —on the quiet stream—with its deep dark flow beneath the single arch! As its noon-day radiance shone on the same scene, you would have thought its beauty unapproachable; but the exquisitely pensive majesty of the setting sun, as he casts

his last rays on hill, on tower, and tree, give us one more variety of that unchangeable beauty, which lies in landscapes. How soft, how quiet, yet golden, is this carpeting of light. No single rays dazzling the eye, but a subdued radiance which you could look upon for ever Amy Rochford had a beautiful summer evening for her walk to her aunt's cottage—a few miles from Manordean.

In summer the "little" Eskill was still more entitled to that affectionate adjective. At this time it was only in the centre, and for a few yards it retained a depth of seven or eight feet. Contrasting with its winter dignity, when in some rain floods it actually dashed its yellow waters far up a bank, it now left two of the arches of the village bridge almost land arches.

Beneath one of these arches, where the water had diminished to a few feet, a group

of children were playing; their amusement consisted in catching eel-fry, which at that season swarm by the little stream in shoals, that seemed to baffle conception of their number. The young 'fishers' were none of them over twelve. The striking resemblance in all seemed to pronounce them of one family, and their sun-burned cheeks and eyes, sparkling with fun, added to the resemblance. They all seemed like copies of one another, but that there was a slight difference in the heights of each. The tallest was also the gravest of the gleeful quartett. The water ran deep and rapid beneath the bridge, save for a foot or so near the bank, where it gurgled among tiny rocks. Between those rocks the eel-fry swept by in thousands —and stretched at full length on the rock, wetted by the continual plashing of their bared feet—the little urchins dabbled

with their hands in the water, and triumphantly brought up every minute ten or twenty of the most diminutive eel-fry, wriggling and twisting about their chubby little fingers. Quite regardless of the awful consequences of soiled pinafores seemed the merry little fellows. Every new haul of the invaluable eels produced a shout of triumph which, echoed as it was by the arch overhead, was repeated again and again with a Babel of sound, as merry and as vociferous as ever betokened mirth or dispelled care. The curly locks—the chubby faces—the pattering feet of the little revellers—the dark stream sweeping by so calmly in the centre—all formed a pleatant scene—pleasant in its complete picture of childhood's untutored happiness.

"Oh! Alfy, such a big one!" cried the smallest of the four, as he made a new capture.

"Go 'long!" said Alfy, with a most unstudied contempt of tone—"What is it to mine—mine was fifty times as big!" he said frowningly and indignantly.

"Oh! goodness, fifty times!—such a story!"

"Well, but I have more than any," said one corpulent little fellow, who seemed to be chucklingly counting over his store, which he kept in a half-cracked pitcher.

"Yes, but such little ones!" rejoined Georgy, who still seemed disposed to maintain his superiority of success.

"Look, look, Bill," said the speaker, "there is a fellow under the rock, nearly as big as a trout! Catch him! Catch him!" and suiting the action to the word, the little fellow made a splash forwards,—paddled with his feet in the water, and clutched vehemently, but failed.

"Oh! what a pity!" was echoed all

around, as the uncaptured individual was seen darkly winding in the distance. Georgy stood looking after him almost with tearful eyes.

"I'd give a thousand pounds to catch that fellow," he said emphatically.

"I'd give up my supper," musingly muttered Bill.

"I'd give my new top." added Alfy.

"I wonder," said little Jack, speaking for the first time, "I wonder was he greatly afraid when Georgy was near catching him."

"Afraid!" said Georgy with disgust, "how could he know it? Eels have no souls."

That settled the point. Jack was too much engaged with a frisky little fry, which was very near escaping, to make any question of the point.

"What will become of that eel, I won-

der," said Alfy, as he seemed to rouse himself out af a serious reverie.

"He'll go to the sea, to be sure," replied Georgy, who though not the eldest, seemed to assume a superiority of information seldom questioned.

"May be he can't find the way," objected Jack.

"Oh! you little fool, don't you know that the river itself goes on to the sea."

"Is the sea big, Georgy," asked Alfy.

"'Tis ten thousand thousand times bigger than the river."

"Oh! man!" exclaimed Alfy. Jack did not speak, but kept his eyes open.

"It's bigger than any thing you ever saw; there's no end of it," continued Georgy.

"But won't the fish be tired?" doubtingly asked Bill.

"Fishes are never tired," rejoined the

dogmatic Georgy, "Fishes can swim for ever and ever. They never stop swimming. I engage you never saw a fish walking."

This was conclusive.

The little anglers seemed now preparing for home. Doubtless they had collected enough of their prized prey, yet still as Georgy, who seemed the leader, urged on them that they'd be late for supper, and would get none, Billy and Alfy would make a fresh bolt for "just another, a fine big fellow."

"If we are late for dinner, we can eat the eels," remarked Johnny.

"Yes, but father will blame us," replied Georgy, with a not very saddened glance.

With many a lingering look, they prepared to leave, Georgy going first and calling the rest after him. Once again he climbed up the bank, determined to give them an

example, and once again he called out to the truant lingerers to come on.

Suddenly a splash and a faint half stifled cry! In the dark current the blue dress is seen half floating, but the little chubby arms are stoutly paddling for life!

"Oh! Georgy, Georgy," roared out little Alfy, who in helpless terror watched his little brother struggling speechless with the strong and rapid stream.

In a second Georgy was at the bank, and for a moment hesitated as his little cheek paled.

"S—a—ave me," gurgled out the little struggling sufferer, still conscious, still bravely battling with the stream.

Another moment and the brothers were locked in one another's arms, as the little hero had dashed in. For a moment Georgy supported, by a vigorous exertion and kicking out of his feet his now sinking

playmate, but quickly he found the water bubbling about his mouth.

"Courage, Jack," said a woman's voice, startlingly, and Amy Rochford whose path to Hillerslie passed by the river, hurried towards the bank.

A few yards down some large stones jutted out into the river, and by the use of this rather insecure footing, one almost reached the centre of the stream. Amy Rochford did not hesitate; she stepped lightly on the first stone, balanced herself as it slightly rocked, with a half spring she gained the second, a firmer resting place—the third she tried with her parasol before trusting herself—it gave way, and rolling on one side was so displaced as to lie more flatly and thus go an inch or two under water. But, disregarding the horror of wet feet, Amy stepped on it, and thus regained the fourth—a huge white stone.

By this time Georgy and his little brother had been carried, half floating, half wading, still struggling, down the river, but, grasping her extended parasol and thus brought within reach of her hand as she knelt down, George was drawn out of the current, holding fast his younger brother.

As she landed them on the rock, they clambered on their feet and stood for some minutes dripping with wet, and breathless with excitement and surprise. Yet they seemed struggling to show that they were not quite overcome.

"Oh Jack! are you drowned?" asked Alfy coming close up, and his cheeks trickling with tears, he peered into the wet face, which still kept its rosiness with the wet hair nearly blinding up the eyes.

"'Pon my honour he's drowned," roared out Bill, with an emphatic despondence quite decisive as he stood at a timid dis-

tance of a few yards. "'*Pon my honour*, he's drowned," he again ejaculated, bursting into uproarious grief and flinging himself on the ground.

It took some time to comfort the little fellow; as it was not until Jack came up, and wetted him all over by kissing him, that he would cease exclaiming that he was *sure* he was drowned, and at each exclamation vouching his honour for the fact.

"Well, Georgy, you are a brave fellow," said the young girl, as with her handkerchief she wiped away the trickling water from the child's face.

"No, but you're very brave cousin Amy," said Georgy, "we are very, very thankful to you."

"Why you see Georgy, though you are a young man, I am a little taller than you and I could step over these stones, while

your little short legs would have tumbled in."

"But your pretty dress is wet and your shoes."

"Oh! that's not much—and but for my dress I never could have had courage to risk those shaky stones. I knew that did I get into deep water my dress would float me up."

Georgy rejoined, "But cousin Amy, run home and change your shoes—you look pale."

"Yes, perhaps," she exclaimed, "but I was not afraid. Come Georgy, you come with me and have a run up to Hillerslie."

"I ca'nt Amy; brother Merle wants me this evening."

"Well Bill, you can come with me," said Amy.

"No!" said Bill very sturdily.

"Why, Bill," said Amy, opening her eyes.

"Because father told us not to speak to Mr. Rochford nor any of you, and not to call you cousin Amy."

Amy grew very red. "Bill, my darling little fellow," and she kissed him, though the little urchin turned away his pouting lips, "do'nt say such things—I am your cousin Amy, and you should love me."

"And your father keeps us out of our property, but—we'll gain the lawsuit.

"If you do Bill," said Amy, laughing, though she felt tears in her eyes, "wont you give me some? A very little."

"Yes, I will, because you saved Jack."

"And don't you like me a little, Bill."

She was kneeling down on the grass, and Bill was standing up, his face on a level with her's.

"I do very much—but I am not to love you, father said."

"I'll tell you Bill what we can do: when you gain the law-suit you can marry me, and then we can both have the property."

Bill looked at her doubtingly and gave a quaint smile out of the corner of his mouth, and said gravely, "I am too small."

"Oh no! quite big enough."

"You might marry my brother Merle though, and I'll marry Katy Jordan."

Amy laughed, kissed Bill, and hastily got up. She turned to Georgy, whom she urged to run home quickly, and walking briskly herself, she soon disappeared round the next turning of the Hillerslie road.

CHAPTER VI.

Amy had taken off her bonnet and cloak, somewhat sprinkled with rain, and sat on a low stool in her aunt's tiny, tidy parlour. The little stool was just at the foot of her aunt's arm-chair, and her aunt sat knitting away energetically.

"How is Fido, aunt?"

"How is Fido!" repeated Miss W. sharply. "What a question! As if the most interesting conversation you could introduce is about a nasty little brute! Why did you come out such a day as this? I suppose

you think that if you get cold again, I'll go over and nurse you."

"I came over to see you, aunt, and I am sure if I were ill *you* would come to see *me*." And Amy gave a low cough, intentionally, or unintentionally, it would be hard to say.

"There child, I protest you've got a cold already. You are so obstinate—you must have your own way. You never follow my advice. I must give you some of my own cordial this evening—remind me of it. But you will not. Like all silly young people—you think physic no good—"

"Indeed, aunt—"

"You are always interrupting me! Hold your tongue! In my day, young girls did not talk half so much. But now they think of nothing but young men."

Amy looked up—her eyes laughing with such a happy light mirth. "I have no young men to think of, aunt."

"Indeed—indeed," said Miss Wormleighton, shaking her little corkscrews.

"No indeed, aunt—I never will marry, but live always single like you—and I am sure—,"

"Hold your tongue, child, you know nothing about it! Your head is turned by what people say of you. That foolish giddy Miss Pennant never stopped talking of you the last time she came here, and that young puppy Charles Smith kept praising your complexion and your eyes last evening to my very face—I never heard such silliness. You are well enough child, if you had something of an aristocratic air," and Miss W. straightened herself, "and if you did not stoop so abominably; and if you would but dress you hair as I advised you; and if you did—not—laugh—and talk—so much," concluded the dignified spinster, talking very slow, hitting her knitting

needle against the back of her chair at every word.

Amy was discreetly silent as if thinking on what her aunt said.

"Bless me, child, don't be getting so mopish and melancholy. You put me in the fidgets. Hold up your head, child—I do not mean to make you sad, or to put you in bad spirits."

"I am sure you did not, dear aunt," said Amy, in a touching timid tone.

After a pause she added, "There's to be a party at Mrs. Jordan's on Thursday.

"I know, child."

"I suppose you are asked, aunt."

"Yes—yes, I'm pestered with Mrs. Jordan. She's up here every hour asking my advice how to manage the supper table; I must lock myself up at last, people so gather about."

"I do not think Mary and I shall be

there," said Amy. "We are asked, but my father says he will not let us go."

"Um," said Miss W. doubtfully.

"I am sure we do not go out so often—

"You go out often enough, *I* think."

"But, dear aunt, this will be such a nice party, and you told me the next party I should go to, you would show me how a supper table should be laid out; and now I would so like to see this, as I suppose Mrs. Jordan will be very much aided by your advice."

"Aided, child! why the woman has not an ounce of brains in her head. What do you think? She was wanting to have large fruit pies placed at the head and foot—and meats and jellies ranged along the side. I thought she was losing her senses. If I have anything to do with the supper table, I must have everything to do with it. I'll be no *aide-de-camp* to Mrs. Jordan.

Indeed the woman is very civil, only she talks too much."

"But I suppose we shall not see the supper table. Mary, too, who is so good a housekeeper—"

—"She knows nothing about it—"

—"Except what you taught her—she is very anxious to learn all those things, but nothing can move my father."

"He is a very foolish obstinate man child. Just like all the family."

"He never gives up his own opinion."

"Um."

"I do not think the strongest minded or the cleverest person in the world could make him give up anything he had once set his heart on."

"Um."

"He is so resolute, so firm. No entreaty can move him, nothing—"

"Hold your tongue, child," broke in

Miss W. sharply. "Will you ever stop talking? Bring me over my writing desk."

And Amy, her eyes lighting with joy, leaped from her stool and in a few minutes had the writing materials arranged.

"Stay here to night," said her aunt.

"Yes, aunt."

And then nothing was heard but the little splutter of the nervous old maid's pen, as she slowly and deliberately penned a short note.

CHAPTER VII.

Mark Graydon, the father of the young fishers, whose pursuit of eel-fry had nearly ended in disaster, was a man of a very common type, if we may believe the social histories, heard every day in conversation, of men who are "no one's enemy but there own."

He had inherited from his father a law-suit, a hot temper, and the feelings and refinement of a gentleman. The long law-

suit may have caused the hot temper—but neither overbore the tone of honor and of courtesy, which through many failings would still mark the words and bearing of Mark Graydon. Though now near fifty, his father, from whom he inherited those gifts and qualities, had died but three years before the period at which his children have been introduced to the reader. The family of the Graydons had been for a period of fifteen years in the bitterness of narrow means, yet with an expectation of coming affluence, as incongruous with their situation as it was dangerous to their happiness and peace. "The lawsuit" had become in the family a "household word." The patrimony of their ancestors had passed into the hands of another branch of the family—the Rochford's, through fraud and chicanery said old Herbert Graydon—and so said his son, and so said every

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and he so refuted, as gravely as possible, every childish objection made by the children, whose thoughts would sometimes run on with the usual scope of young imaginations—and he so patienty and gravely combatted Bill's opinion, thnt it would be

would be gained"; Georgy had good hopes of having a pony at that same blissful time; Jack was, so his father solemnly promised him, to be "bound to a confectioner" on that event, and Bill had not yet made up his mind as to his share of the magnificent acquisitions to result "when the lawsuit would be gained." The last-named tyro was in a most puzzling and grave perplexity as to his choice between a gun, a sword, an ass and car, and a box of paints, and had not yet decided between the almost equal claims of all to his admiration. He greatly feared that should he pronounce for either, he should be strictly bound to it; and so, each evening as the father and his four sons sat down to their frugal meal, the father would invariably ask Bill "had he made his choice?" and Bill would get into a reverie of doubt that would continue until supper would give him a respite. It was not un-

pleasing to see Mark Graydon sit down to the spare dinner afforded by the family finances. He so laughed and joked about giving the most meat to the boy that took the most soup, (that was a standing joke, as well as a serious fact, in the Graydon family) and he talked so seriously and earnestly even with the youngest of the little ones about the chances of the lawsuit—and he again pointed out so clearly the iniquity of the opposing claim—and he told so well, over and over again, the old stories about the family mansion which they were so soon to recover—and he pointed out the improvements he would effect in the house —and he so refuted, as gravely as possible, every childish objection made by the children, whose thoughts would sometimes run on with the usual scope of young imaginations—and he so patienty and gravely combatted Bill's opinion, thnt it would be

better to fight for the estate than to go to law—and in his native simplicity of mind, and in the childishness of thought, engendered by his constant devotion to one theme, he made himself, without intending it, so much the companion and friend of the little fellows, that they loved him as one of themselves, and were consequently somewhat over petted, and perhaps somewhat spoiled.

Mark Graydon's wife had been dead some years. The real "head of the family" was the eldest son, Merle Graydon—the half-brother of the young family of truants. He was now twenty-three, older by twelve years than the eldest of the younger section of the household. He had been intended for the army, but the increasing difficulties of the family compelled him to give up an expensive profession. He obtained a situation as under-agent to the

principal local lord of the soil of Manordean—Sir Horace Mildmay—and with his small salary, aided by the remnant of his father's property, he worked on, supporting the house and giving to the education of his brother's the leisure time he could command. They were a merry truant lot—hearty, affectionate, and wild—not good scholars, but quick and intelligent in matters to which their natural inclination led them. That they were left rather too free, the scene at the river-side seems to indicate.

That evening, while Mr. Graydon and his son were poring over a new set of law papers, a knock was heard suddenly at the hall-door which was quickly opened, and the whisperings and shuffling of little feet, and some mysterious sounds were heard from the hall,

"Boys, I'm listening to you!" called out

Mr. Graydon, in a threatening and unusually petulant tone.

The noises ceased—but again re-commenced. Mr. Graydon had again commenced to reperuse his letter, but raising his head he called out: "What on earth are those children about? Alfred, George," he thundered out, "will you be quiet, or do you want me to come out to you?"

Merle Graydon rose and went ont as if to find out the occasion of the disturbance, and partially closed the door. After a few indistinct sounds, the words "I'll tell him myself," were heard in the parlour—and Georgy, his clothes still dripping, rushed in; and half laughingly and half timidly, hurriedly uttered,

"Oh! Papa, Jack and I fell into the river, but we got only a little wet—and we don't care for it—and we are not at all frightened—and our clothes are nearly

dry—and we are not a bit hurt—and we'll go to bed early to have our clothes dried—and we'll not ask any supper—and we'll get up early in the morning and have our history task—and then, pa, sure you'll not be vexed?"

Mr. Graydon stood breathless with astonishment. The stout little fellow was covered with dust, and his face could hardly be seen. Yet his appeal had so anticipated all the usual modes of punishment, that Mr Graydon was fairly puzzled. After making some hurried inquiries as to how it happened, he was about to laugh heartily at the occurrence; when as he turned about, and again sat down, his eyes fell on the letter that still remained in his hand. As they did so, a twitch of pain passed over his countenance. He put his hand to his brow as if to collect his thoughts, and then said hurriedly and tenderly—kissing the little fellow:

"There, Georgy, I forgive you, my boy. Be good in future. Go to bed boys," he said, speaking to the little group, who with wet and soiled clothes and faces clustered half-laughing, half-frightened at the door.

The children left the room, and he turned to the papers with knitted brow, and "worked" on, sometimes jotting down figures in the margin. His son was quietly reading at the other side.

After an hour's work, the father started up and said, "Here Merle my boy do this for me, I can't work, thinking of those children.

Merle did not smile as he might have been tempted to do, but he took the work willingly, and said "perhaps you had better see that they have all gone to bed."

And the young man grave for his years, turned again to the file of papers, bending

over them with keen eye, clear head, and ready hand.

Meanwhile the indulgent father seemed as he sported, laughed, and talked with his children, to have completely forgotten his late cause of sorrow and their transgression. He got from them a full history of the incident—he listened to their account of the "big fellow" that escaped, he satisfied them on the question as to whether fishes had souls—and as he placed them all in bed, he felt himself completely happy, and in their little bedroom, containing four tiny bedsteads, he kept them in roars of laughter, imitating a negro in love.

"I'm not a bit sorry, Papa," said Jack, as his father finished another story, "I'm not a bit sorry that Sally went away—and I hope no other will ever come, for if we had no servant you'd always put us to bed, and tell us such fine stories."

"But," said Georgy, "we must have servants when we gain the lawsuit. Rich people must have four or five servants."

"To be sure, my boy," said the father, "and more," and he then entered on a detail of the establishment he expected to keep.

CHAPTER VIII.

INNUMERABLE were Mrs. Jordan's preparations for that great event—her annual ball. The two Miss Jordans were indefatigable in untiring exertions for full seven days before; but if a visitor came, the coarse dresses, worn for despatch and economy, were laid aside with incredible celerity, and with calm composure and apparelled neatness, Jemima and Lucy Jordan entered the drawing-room with an air as gracefully indolent as if they had

been all day reclining on a *boudoir* sofa, or inactively amusing themselves over the newest novel. What a mass of confusion, toil, and trouble, that one ball necessitated! Who could believe that those preparations of dusting, cleansing, hammering, adjusting, and confectionery-concoction were to result in the brilliant scene of easy enjoyment, which was to meet the charmed eyes of the "all-approving" guests on Thursday evening!

Mrs. Jordan's house was happily embowered in trees; and as lights gleamed from its many windows, the approaching guests had a pretty picture as the softened blaze from inside streamed through cheerful crimson curtains on the high trees that seemed lifting up their long branches and leafy tops to look in at the festal scene. Carriage after carriage rolled rapidly up the smooth short avenue, and like stars out

of dark clouds there emerged from them bright eyes and small twinkling feet, and lithe forms, and then disappeared through the doorway, which seemed to have a marvellous capacity of containing any amount of humanity that could crowd through its patient pillars. If we pass into a small dressing-room, we find a crowd opposite the little mirror, as pleased and quick glances are given at hair, possibly deranged by the drive, or complexion heightened by the night air; and much mutual friendliness, as friends meet and lips are pressed with the ostentatious affectionateness of female friendship. One young girl, through all her assumed ease, is trembling—it is her first ball, and the light in her timid eye is uncertain; her little gloved hand, as it rests for a moment on the toilette table, pulsates with painful agitation; and the colour on her cheek is changing. Yet,

not for worlds would she forego the ordeal she so dreads. For what a bright scene is to her that unseen ball-room! How perfect, how noble, how graceful, how dignified, she pictures the coming cavaliers—her possible admirers. How sweet—thrilling sweet—must not that cup be she is about to taste! Another has given a short satisfied glance at her reflected face and figure, and calmly turns away: it is her twentieth ball, and she is sure to have a train-attendant. A mother, eye-earnest, is trying to conceal her pride as her two tall daughters, dressed alike, stand close together. A lady, younger in dress than in face, is engagingly and affectionately attentive to a blushing beauty; and is readily civil to all, with a despairing good-nature, amusing if it were not painful. And Amy Rochford comes in with her capricious courtesy, coldly passing some most motherly

matrons, and dropping some few humorous words to Emily Wordsell; then standing near the mirror talking to the Pennants; her head erect, and her white throat gleaming like a little column; her attitude, self-reliant, as she stands poised on one foot, the other just resting on the ground, its satin shoe gleaming from beneath her pink robe. And, unconsciously, even in that dressing-room full of female rivals, Amy has a circle around her; and is listening, like a princess at a levee, to what Lizzy Pennant is saying. Mary Rochford is smiled on by every-one, and is at once secured by the timid *debutante* as one to be talked to without gasping for breath.

But now the brief preliminaries of *entree* are over, and Mrs. Smith leads towards the ball-room.

How changed become the features as the lights from the chandaliers fall on them

How calm and retiring is ths single-minded timid glance of the younger portion of the group as they enter! Except Amy Rochford, who, without regarding one face around, and yet without the slightest tinge of an affectation of indifference, moved with her light short step up to where her aunt sat, enshrined by Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Pennant. As Amy was reputed to be Miss Wormleighton's favourite niece, Mrs. Jordan's warm reception was not marvellous, but Mrs. Pennant, who "never liked" Amy (entertaining towards her one of those particular prejudices which old and middle-aged people think they have a right to entertain,) was as cold and distant as she could be: while Amy, with her usual thoughtlessness, was equally courteous to the civil Mrs. Jordan and the stiff Mrs. Pennant.

Taking an offered seat next Mrs. Jordan,

Amy glanced around. The room looked well. The pictures in the walls with their white frills, peaked chins, and high foreheads, looked down with surprising calmness.

Some of the younger men were grouped in knots around the windows—

"There's George Stanford," thought Amy, "he looks well. How gracefully he dresses! Who is that talking to him? Henry Unthank, as I live! How singular! I thought he was to stop in London for the winter; how glad Mary will be! I cannot like that man. I hope he'll not ask me to dance. And there's Forsythe with his sombre dress, blue eyes, and heavy mouth. That man is ugly, I think, and yet I'm always forgetting it. I wish he'd come over and speak to me. How he stands back there, near the window, as if he did not care for any here. He is looking this

way. I'll not meet his eye. He has his eye on me. I can feel it, I'll not look at him. I think he's moving—he's coming! No, but changing to make room for Mrs. Mapleson. She's talking to him. I hate Mrs. Mapleson. So vulgar!

Amy's unuttered thoughts were interrupted by a low good-humoured voice near her :—

"I hope Miss Rochford is quite well."

"Ah! Mr. Unthank," said Amy, bowing. "Have you long left London?

"Oh! yes, I left London months ago, but I have not been down here more than a few weeks."

"Have you seen my father since you came?"

"No." Then after a pause and in a low tone :—"I suppose you know that I am no longer your father's agent."

"No," replied Amy, looking a little surprised; "I heard nothing of it."

"Your father has some prejudice against me, I am inclined to think. We parted friends, but—"

"Who is that lady in blue?" asked Amy, quickly.

"Miss Unwin, I believe," answered Unthank, a little confused at the interruption. "Where is your sister?" he added.

"With Mrs. St. Leger in the next room."

Then Amy, relieved of her unwelcome companion, tried to converse with Mrs. Jordan, but stealthily kept her eye on Forsythe, who remained still immovable in the recess of the window.

While she had been watching, rather than looking at, Forsythe, Merle Graydon came unnoticed from the other side of the room, and his voice first told her that he

was at her side. She started, and as she turned to speak to him, the colour rose to her cheek from an instinctive feeling that her cousin and Forsythe were rivals. Her companion could not read her thoughts evidently, for his eye brightened as he saw her not quite at ease, and his tone in speaking became almost affectionate. They talked on indifferent topics—but after a few minutes, Merle Graydon seemed to feel that the embarrassment shewn was not the embarrassment of pleasure. There was something very manly and simple in his manner; his sentences came out at intervals quietly and solidly, and there was an honest, earnest look in his handsome brown eyes. He was grave, somewhat too grave, in the expression of his face, but when he smiled, there was a homely humour very pleasant to see. Amy, as she spoke to him, tried to be pleased. She went from subject

to subject so quickly, that he could hardly follow her; and while he was making up his thoughts and words to answer one remark, she had asked some question requiring another change in his thoughts. His face shewed this; it sometimes wore a heavy puzzled look, but soon its native good humour triumphed. Amy's manner on this occasion was exceptional. She liked Merle Graydon; she was not quite sure that some day she might not love him—but she could not conquer her impatience at his slow ways—his solid and sensible though good humoured way of looking at things. She could not help respecting him, and then in appearance he satisfied her sense of beauty. He was tall—gracefully yet strongly made—he was a good specimen of a man. His face was handsome—and its only defect was an upper lip a little too long. She tried to convey cordiality

in her manner, she was rather conscious of failure, and so she get nervous and irritable. She did not like to admit to herself that the real cause of her irritation was that Forsythe had taken no notice of her, and that but for Merle Graydon speaking to her he might have done so.

After sometime when Merle Graydon had failed in making Amy revert to "old times," as he called a year ago, when both were very friendly, and when she had failed in drawing him into conversation about London, Amy looked annoyed, and Merle Graydon looked puzzled. He glanced round the room as if in search of a new subject. Before he had succeeded, a quadrille commenced. Amy was, just as she did not wish, the partner of Henry Unthank, her sister's lover, the most good-humoured, good-natured looking young

man to be seen in the room. The smile was never off his lips; and his voice was ever ready to pay a sincere, well-meant, compliment to every lady, and to give a friendly word to all.

CHAPTER IX.

Forsythe still sat in the window recess. Amy never appeared to observe him; but she was always wishing to see whether he had moved. The quadrille was over; Amy sought her sister. There sat Mary "talking sense" to Mrs. Jordan, as quiet, as gentle, as unexcited as if she were at home. At the other side was Henry Unthank, who took the vacant place, as Amy, under pretence of seeking her aunt, declined it. Then Amy retired to the window recess at

the end of the room, opposite to Forsythe, and again watched the varied groups as the hum of conversation again rose in a confused musical murmur.

She saw Unthank and her sister talking earnestly. How brightly looks Mary's eye (thought she); I never saw her look so happy. She likes Unthank, I know; but how her very cheek is crimsoned with gladness! Goodness! to think of such as he quickening one's pulse, or bringing the blood to the cheek. For a wonder, too, he looks serious and resolute. Both so changed! It is unfair to watch them; but I cannot help it. What can he be saying? Ha! she is confused. She is playing with her fan! What a fool to let him see her embarrassment. What gladness is gleaming in the little fellow's eyes! I would sooner be torn to pieces than let a man watch my cheek changing so. I was wrong,

she does not care for Forsythe. What is *he* doing? *He* is watching *me*. Vexation! He must have seen me spying.

In spite of her resolve of imperturbable calm, her eye slightly wavered, and after turning away her head for a few minutes, she rose and glided quietly and unnoticed into the card-room. She stood by her aunt, who was deeply engaged in loo; made some enquiries as to her fortune; and then passed into a *boudoir* at the further end. This was unoccupied. She sat there in peace and silence for some minutes. The refreshing air came in through the lattice, and the beautiful summer night tempted her out. Snatching a large shawl from a near seat, she wrapped her shoulders and descended from the boudoir by a little stone staircase into the garden. She ran down to a walk she well knew, and there paced up and down. How confused were her

thoughts! The sound of music came in distant and mellowed sweetness through the trees; but all immediately around was still and silent as sleep. The contrast was agreeable—the peculiarity of her position pleased her. She was near men and women—within reach of the faint sound of their familiar voices—but she was alone. How quickly ran on these thoughts! Now on Mary and Unthank; imagining them at the altar; married; Unthank as her brother-in-law. It seemed very natural. She thought of Mary and Unthank sitting, evening after evening, by the same fire-side—and she imagined Mary always patient and pleased, and Unthank always good-humoured and kind. But (thought she) how little that would suit me! Even if I tolerated him for a day, how tiresome he would grow week after week. What would he say? Would I get tired of

Merle Graydon? Yes, I think so. He is kind and good but— Forsythe! Ah! he and I would fight most certainly; and then, if he were independent and yet not sullen, I would be friends with him again. I wish he would talk to me to-night. He talks to no one. He is seldom cheerful—why?

She still continued her pacing to and fro. As she turned to resume again the promenade of the walk, she noticed a figure standing against one of the trees at the other end. It stood as if it had stood there for hours; though, as it had not been there when she passed the spot just but a moment before, it must have taken the place during the two minutes that elapsed while she had walked from one end of the avenue to the other. It was motionless, and being partly hidden by the branches, looked strange. Amy paused in her walk, and the other advanced.

"Mr. Forsythe!" cried Amy.

"I beg your pardon!" was the reply. "I did not see you, Miss Rochford, and I thought none but myself would stroll out. I did not dream either, that you, above all others, would be absent from the happy scene beyond."

"*I, above all others,*" Amy could not help repeating aloud. Forsythe did not reply. She continued her walk with an impatient quick step. Forsythe's eyes followed her. He thought she was leaving; but as she came to the end of the avenue, as before she turned and paced down, passing Forsythe, who stood observing her, as if she were not aware of his presence.

She was vexed at his not speaking. But as she glanced at him, his face was again in the shade, and she fancied she could trace a bitterness in his bent brow, and a heaviness in his mild eye, and the appearance of sadness disarmed her.

She stopped opposite where he stood, and said, in a hurried tone that she had intended to be careless, "You are not enjoying the pleasures of the evening."

"I have danced once," he said, stepping out to her side and smiling, "and I do not think you have danced more frequently. Do not stand in the night air. You had better walk."

She turned quietly and resumed her walk. He walked by her side. He went on, slowly speaking with his strange, quiet voice:—

"I could not help noticing in the ball-room that you were observing those around you. There is very little selfishness shown in a scene such as that yonder, and those who take a pleasure in watching happy faces, may be glad enough to watch our hostess and her guests this evening."

He paused for some time, during which

she could note the sound of their footsteps, sometimes on the gravel walk, and sometimes on some scattered leaves. He resumed:—"At other times, I would prefer that lighted room with its moving forms, and smiling faces, and low hum of words, to this summer night beautiful as it is, but to night I am not in the humour for society. I am not sad, nor have I ever been fond of sadness. Often while sitting as I generally do, not taking part in social pleasure, I have been as happy as any of the crowd I observed. But awhile ago, some one spoke near me by chance, in the very tone and accent of a person I knew when I was young; it brought back some unpleasant thoughts; and I thought this garden would drive them away. It has not; but it has calmed them."

He spoke not fluently, but earnestly.

"Some say," he continued, after a pause,

during which both walked on, side by side, "that nature has a power of soothing sorrow—that a tall calm cliff, immovable in its majesty, seems a great preacher, preaching patience—and that the summer sky smiles away the harshness of bitter memories. I wish I could think so. But all around us exist but in ourselves; and the stars *you* see are not the stars that shine for me. To some, as to Hamlet, the most beautiful sky is but a pestilent congregation of vapours.' The only power really grateful to your own soul is another soul, superior and akin."

"Superior?" said Amy, in a low inquiring tone.

"Yes; I think you will agree with me. If you have suffered wrong or sorrow; if the harshness of others cuts you to the heart's core, or the native pain of the heart wells up in floods of bitterness, what can

soften the sorrow? Surely not the mere sympathy of others—not that affectionateness and pity which woman so readily offers to those she loves; not all this; but a consciousness of another who comprehends your grief without feeling it; and, as it were, holds your fevered hand without his own pulse beating with the tremulous quickness of the invalid. This thought is associated in my mind with illness. Once, when in fever, I felt how assuring it was to feel and know that the physician and the nurse were superior to my prostration, had no distracted brain; no hot fevered hand; no weak faint voice. Man or woman, in grief as well as in illness, is soothed only by superiority to suffering—yet perfect apprehension of it."

"Can both be combined?"

"I think so. Man or woman are not won by submission: there is something of

the tyrant in all of us—we treat brutally those who bend before us. Something of the tyrant's cowardice, too, as we bend before those really superior. It must, however, be no superiority merely in words, or affected; it must be a real superiority; scarcely shown, but felt."

Amy felt forced to silence and assent; but she wished not to yield in anything to her companion. She said in a somewhat petulant tone:—"Superiority does not in itself attract; I have met men and women superior to me, yet I disliked them."

"You mistook them; they were not superior. They were far from your observation; they moved in a foreign sphere of thought. Had they been superior to you, they would have won your homage. Superior to others they might have been, if they subdued them. But there is no such thing as abstract superiority. He who

wins your homage, who prevails over you, he alone will be your master. But it seems strange, to speak of you as *mastered*," he continued, and the smile on his lips that Amy could not see rippled his voice to her quick ear. "Other women have been, will be; but how your heart, so girlish, and yet so womanly, now throbs denial to the possibility of submission! There is a mastery, however, which even you might welcome. There are words, and deeds, and thoughts, that come to hearts even as proud as yours with a power as if you owed them allegiance from childhood; and could not choose but love them. But as your ready thought has said to you now, (if I can read your thoughts aright), those deeds and thoughts you may love —and yet never love man or woman acting or speaking them. You are right. How still and deathlike is the evening air!

The silence seems to spread itself over all like a stiff shroud. But that is too fanciful. —Do you remember the evening you spent at Fernwood?" he continued, in a hesitating tone, unusual with him.

Amy started. Her thoughts had been on it. "Yes," she answered readily.

"I had just been reading some new books on what we may call the youth of the material world around us; and I fear I spoke, more mindful of my own earnestness than the pleasure of my hearer."

She was about to that say she been interested, but was silent.

He continued, as if he had not expected a reply:—"The subject has a charm for me. It has reality in it; the solid substantial reality of rocks, and forests, and mountains, and seas; yet still it has a singular vagueness and imaginative uncertainty which attracts me like a mystic

poem. The eye of science which can pierce the cloud hanging over the past, and can tell us a true history of what the eye of man never saw; the hand of science which can guide an unerring pencil to picture what the world was ere man's oldest ancestors existed; this charms me, and subdues me to an awe that mingles with my blood as I now speak. That evening, I felt strangely moved to watch your listening imagination; feeling that every thought I uttered had become your thought, and that every scene I saw, your eye also rested on. We both seemed to stand alone in isolated humanity among a former world, where we were strangers to the greatness and beauty around us. The contrast was singular. As it were before me was the repellant universe, which knew not man, and seemed haughtily regardless of his presence; and by my side were you, your

thoughts and mine linked, as we together gazed on a world that knew us not."

How soft and musical fell the voice on Amy's ear! How still and silent was her heart! She seemed to herself to lose all but the one sufficient thought of his presence. She knew not but that he spoke. She had resolved to speak freely on all subjects; especially to differ where she could from what he said. But in spite of her still living will, she felt as if *he* possessed her thoughts. There was something singular too, in the manner in which he spoke to her—directly to her—and yet seemed so wrapped in his own thoughts, so isolated.

They continued walking; and he spoke on. And still it was *he* that spoke, and no effort she made could seperate him from what he said. As in some of Rembrandt's pictures, the artist's face and form overlook each group.

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"Loved!"

"Yes, by the poor. He must be wealthy, as he is constantly charitable. When there was fever there he watched night and day with some of the sick children. But of late he has been in very bad spirits. Poor fellow! I think his health must be bad, or perhaps some friend of his has died."

Amy took but little interest in the remainder of the revelry.

CHAPTER X.

In the early part of the evening she had resolved to sleep at Melton, and go to Hillerslie in the morning. She had intended mentioning this to her aunt; but her interview with Forsythe so occupied her thoughts, that for the remainder of the evening she much preferred the company of her own musings. Everything but the echo within her heart of what he had said jarred upon the "nice and delicate ear of thought." As she dreamingly listened to the prattle of little Henry

Jordan, (who gave her most minute and emphatic accounts of his progress in the erection of several small houses and other architectural works in the "garden,") she found herself after supper left again almost alone in the *boudoir*, from which she had sought the garden some two hours before. The festivities still continued. Frequent deputations came for her to join in them; she pleaded headache, and professed herself sufficiently amused with the little fellow, who was in high glee at having a listener so patient. When she again sought the ball-room she found her aunt gone. This surprised her.

"Your sister went with her," said Mrs. Smith, "and Mr. Unthank also. But after leaving us at home, our carriage could take you on to Hillerslie."

"Oh no," said Amy, "I stay at Melton to-night."

"Then you can come with us still. We pass Melton gate, you know."

Amy accepted; and soon reached home.

She surmised that her aunt was offended at her continued and unusual absence from her side during the evening; and, that, in consequence she had not sent for her on going away. This did not much alarm Amy, however—if, indeed, the displeasure of any person could alarm her. She knew that five minute's apologetic silence would atone for an offence of tenfold greater gravity, and would be a retaliation that her aunt would be glad to purchase off by any amount of forgiveness. But (thought Amy, as usual impulsively,) why did not *Mary* send for me? She must have seen that my aunt was offended with me, and I could have set it right by a word. Mary is so quiet, and sometimes so provokingly reserved. I am not quite sure I love her.

She has always something hidden, and she is so invulnerable—you can't find out her faults. Ah! I guess now; Mary wished to have Unthank home with her in the carriage, and there would not have been room for him if I came. Fido and my aunt always fill one seat, and Miss Mary and Unthank sat in the other. Very pleasant! How strange to me; if I loved a man, I'd have a strange wish, I think, to fly from him, that I might think t[illegible]re of him; at least I never could [illegible]im. But Mary is so different. [illegible]ves Unthank—I am sure she doe[illegible]es him with a simple straightf[illegible] very homely and [illegible]respectab[illegible] love. She likes to [illegible]o him [illegible] with him, and sh[illegible]cts hi[illegible] ha She just hi[illegible]dare sa[illegible] wa room in th[illegible]ge, an[illegible] hint to my[illegible]made[illegible]

"No."

"No! Have *you* been with her all day?"

"Yes."

"Did *you* get her her cordial?"

"Yes."

"And read for her?"

"Yes."

"And did she not ask for me?

"No."

"And—and—was she satisfied with your reading?"

"She said she was."

Mary was quite quiet. Amy looked a little excited. She was silent for a moment, and rapidly those quick piercing thoughts which a woman's heart so readily forms, came thronging in thousands. Her first impulse was: This looks like rivalry—such a bad thought! And then she saw how paltry it was to feel vexed, as she really, was, at her not being wished for by her

aunt. But to be set aside thus; to have her old duty of attention to her Aunt taken from her so quietly, so effectually, and by one like Mary, whom 'twas useless to scold or insult—who was invincible—it made her fear her sister, and it then sickened her to think of battling against a sister on such a ground. Yet what could she do? She was almost sure her aunt would be glad to receive her; but then the idea of triumphing over her sister, of winning the victory, revolted her as much as the fear of defeat. The complex feelings burned within her, and all the more vexatiously that they could not be expressed. It was not the act itself vexed her; it was not the mere circumstance of Mary attending on her aunt for once; it was the intention and spirit it revealed in her sister. She saw clearly in Mary's mild firmness and decided tone, a resolve to ingratiate herself with her aunt, and a contest for favor

seemed foreshadowed by the trifling act of the day. These many thoughts took but a minute's time for indulgence. She said suddenly and bitterly, remembering Mary's last word:—

"I suppose my aunt said she liked your reading better than mine?" and there was an anticipation of triumph in the tone.

"She did," replied Mary, very quietly.

"*She did not!*" uttered Amy, passionately. "You are telling stories!"

Mary was silent, and Amy was in a passion with herself for having shown such temper. After a pause of some minutes—

"Are you going back to Melton this evening? she asked, sullenly. "My father is to be home at nine."

"If my aunt wishes, I'll go, but if not, I'll stay." "If you aunt wishes! And I —I—and I—I suppose I am—"

She was too vexed to continue. She turned to the glass to conceal her annoyance,

and to her surprise saw that tears of vexation stood in her eyes. With short quick movements she re-aranged her cloak and shawl, which she had taken off, and said:

"*I* must go back to Melton, then. My father would not like to see the house deserted. If my aunt wishes for me she can send for me; but I suppose you will do very well. I give you my room, too, and I'm sure aunt will be very kind to you."

And her large eyes flashing fire, Amy left the room, but as quickly returned; and, without speaking, kissed her sister. And she stood for one moment, as if she would speak or expected Mary to speak. But Mary stood with her calm, gentle smile, and said not a word.

She walked home quickly, as if she sought relief from her troubled thoughts in a rapid pace.

"The cold, heartless, ill-natured thing!" she half-uttered, half-thought; "she might

have told me—made me—go in to see aunt. I that always attend on aunt, to be turned out of my room, and made so little of. No one thought of me. Yet I am sure aunt could not do without me; and I am *sure* she asked for me. If I could *say* these things to some one, it would be something —but I cannot: it looks so selfish to care about it. It is not selfishness, but I do not like to see Mary so keenly and quietly taking my room and my place, and making herself my aunt's favorite niece. I'm so vexed I could stamp with rage. To be—to be—plotted against; to be—yes, I'm sure it's all a plot of Mary's and Unthank's to make my aunt like them. So mean! I *hate* that Unthank, and I hate Mary for loving him."

Amy felt this the more that there was in her thoughts an under-current of contempt for herself at being vexed by anything so trivial. She could find no apparent

difference between herself and Mary: both seemed anxious for their aunt's favor; but inwardly she gave herself the superiority, saying: "if Mary had been always my aunt's favorite niece, *I* would never have tried to supplant her." Another ingredient of her dissatisfaction at her own feelings was, that she could not shut out from herself that the favor of her aunt was connected with worldly advantages. She, herself, really thought but little of them; but she was not indifferent to the pleasures of her position, as the heiress by repute to Hillerslie and her aunt's wealth. It had enabled her to be so free in her thoughts and words, and so kind, too, to many: the kindness of the wealthy being always well received. She questioned herself sharply: "Is it for the fortune I care?" and unaffectedly she could say "No." But to be worsted in any contest gave her annoyance for the time.

CHAPTER XI.

Few men ever set out in life with a purpose more resolute, or principles more fixed, than did Arthur Rochford as he commenced a commercial career. The youngest son of an old Yorkshire family, a prudence, rare in that generation, led him to prefer the chances of commerce to the profitless respectability of intimacy with country squires, each of whom was beneath him in tastes though above him in wealth. Old Squire Rochford could use

but little argument against the young man's mercantile projects; but he sneered sufficiently, and did all to damp a spirit too unusual in his family and among his circle not to be accounted unnatural and out of place. Arthur Rochford was not daunted. He quietly met his father's contempt for commerce with clear truths and apposite comparisons; and more effectually met them by a steady perseverance in his wishes for wealth through trade. At length his father gave him funds, and permission to learn, in London, the mystery of wine-selling; and when five years, spent among butts and bottles, had imbued the young man with the spirit of the craft, he received a cheque for ten thousand pounds in discharge of all parental obligations. He never after saw his father —never after returned to his home. With an intelligent, earnest devotion, he applied

himself to the acquirement of character and wealth. He turned neither to the right hand nor to the left and his career of success continued long unchecked. His care, foresight, and faultless precision, made all natural. One day, a reverse came; it was the first. A cargo was lost; it involved an irretrievable loss of thousands. It made him pause and ponder for some hours. His first thought was, "Am I to blame; has there been a fault of mine?" And after a self-scrutiny, rigid and merciless, he could find no act of his to which he could attribute the misfortune. It was one alike beyond the power of wealth or energy. Hardly had he ceased to think on his late loss, when another and a heavier befel him. A house, with which he had large dealings, failed—involving him deeply. Again, he could not blame himself. Caution in any dealing with the establish-

ment now bankrupt would have been ridiculous three days before; if *it* could not be trusted, all mercantile faith was but a name. It took much misfortune to paralyse the energies, or cloud the clear thoughts of Arthur Rochford.

One hope still remained—the lawsuit. In his home its progress was never mentioned, it was a painful topic with the sisters, for they had a strong feeling though never expressed, that the rights of the law lay with Mark Graydon. When they were younger and while Mr. Rochford remained mostly in London, they had been very intimate with the Graydons, and no children ever knew Mark Graydon without loving him. When as they grew up they learned that there was an old Chancery suit between him and their father, they literally could not help giving their sympathies to the Graydon

side. But they rarely, if ever, spoke about it, and of course their father never referred to it. The suit had now lasted for many years, and if much further prolonged, the costs were likely to exceed the value of the property in dispute. Arthur Rochford pushed the affair with the calm energy he usually devoted to all his undertakings, and up to the present he had had money enough to put the usual means of legal success in full action. But he now felt that his liabilities were being complicated; debts thickened round him. He saw some signs of a result unfavorable to him, and for the first time giving way to some impatience, he instructed his solicitor to facilitate a final decision. He had other irons in the fire.

At this time, chance pointed out a path that might re-conduct him to prosperity. A creditor, long and vainly importunate,

as a last resource urged him to a joint venture in contraband commerce, at that time much carried on, between Denmark and England. "You will not pay me a just debt," urged the creditor, "but raise money sufficient, and we both may make tenfold by a quiet little transaction with one I know. You need not stir in the matter; give me the money, and half the profits are yours." It took some time to reconcile the proud, cold, settled merchant to a clandestine dealing, perilous and paltry. But it opened a door from destruction. Without moving in the matter, simply by advancing the funds, he found himself, one morning, eight hundred pounds richer than he had been the night before. It was trifling, when compared with former profits. but now it was welcomed. He was glad, too: the risk was over; and like all sinners, he made a vague vow that he should not be tempted again.

Mr. Rochford's stores were principally in London; but to secure the dealings of his relatives and friends in Yorkshire, he had a branch establishment at L——. When, after many mischances he had given up his London trade, he still continued that in L——; and, from anticipations of success in his provincial speculations, he foreshadowed his ultimate re-establishment in the metropolis. A thought crossed his mind, too, of continued dealings, such as that which had saved him some inconvenience so lately; and he was not long left unexposed to temptation. His former colleague had now another venture in view, far more extended, and far superior to the last. After some subdued resistance, the proposal was accepted—the transaction resolved on. It had a dangerous success—more than fulfilling the wildest hopes of its promoters. Still, it embittered Mr. Roch-

ford's thoughts of coming success and sway, to think on the means he employed; but at worst, they led towards the great end of his life: they were all tending towards wealth, respect, power. When the merchant was so far callous as to look on his illicit commerce as a thing of necessity and of course, he soon dissociated himself from his partner, and connected his dealings with the north-eastern coast. Scarborough was not more than thirty miles from L——, and in those days of clumsy contrivances intended for detection of unlicensed trade, the evasion of the revenue was by no means permanently riskful, though, on some chance occasions it required more than military daring to carry it through.

At about four miles from Manordean, the great military road towards the eastern coast of England wound suddenly round an abrupt hill, and then descended in a neces-

sarily circuitous route towards Manordean valley. The town of L——, five miles from Manordean, was on this road, and owed much of its young prosperity to the early excellence of this thoroughfare, one of the oldest in the North of England. Communication between Manordean and L—— was frequent; the large and increasing necessities of the growing village necessitating constant journies to and fro.

On the fourth evening after Mrs. Jordan's entertainment, Mr. Rochford, well wrapped up in a huge cloak, rode leisurely up towards Warklie cliff, at the base of which the L—— road seemed to rest itself on a small platform before it descended into the dale of Manordean. He was riding from Manordean, and the reins fell loosely on the horse's neck, as its rider rode with his eyes bent on the ground, and his calm face seeming almost lifeless. As the horse

reached the platform, Mr. Rochford raised his head; wheeling about, he faced Manordean, and took a wide glance at the scene before him.

The moon was now nearly fully risen. The clear air of the winter's night seemed a fitting atmosphere for a presiding presence so serene and sovereign. With tender, abiding beauty, the broad beams rested on the landscape that seemed new in this fresh robe of soft light which silvered away the harshness of some rugged pathways, and fondly kissed some sweet green spots, that rose like scattered emeralds here and there by the varied banks of the stream. The landscape was worthy of such a light. At Mr. Rochford's right hand—almost as if he could grasp it—stood Hendon. It seemed a gaunt sentinel over Manordean; watching it with an uncouth tenderness; and sending down to it

a continuous message of careful love, in the ever-rippling Eskill. Opposite, rose a gently up-heaving pasture-land, whose summit was miles away, and gave a faint, fine horizon to the large prospect. On this upland the moonbeams rested with a broad, full light, in which one could almost trace the blades of grass, the hedge-row branches, the long arms of the distant trees, and the varied undulations of the heaving mould where men had reaped the yellow corn, and where Autumn again would see it spring to golden life. On the left, for nearly a mile, an uninterrupted plain lay prostrate at the feet of the Horslarge hills, which, as they rose petty and precipitous, from the very ground, looked more like dark, frowning coast-cliffs, than verdure-clad heaths, which glistened gaily in the noon sun, but were now thrown into singular shade by the sharp shadows which

the moon loves to cast. From this plain *seemed* to sink down, still deeper, Manordean. For the moon—not yet quite risen—left in shade the most of the village but caught the white spire and silvered it with a brilliant light. The shadow which rested on the rest of the village was something strange and bewitching. Like the spire, the tallest trees caught some stray shinings, and seemed like silver fringes to the dark veil that mantled Manordean from the view. But the shade could not quite conceal the forms of tree-guarded cottages, winding orchards, and timid knolls; and one could trace ivied porticoes, pillared porches, thatch-crowned windows, and peaked gables, through the shadow which but just hid the outlines of the picture beneath. Strangely sweet looked that Manordean one had known, through this shadow. As in the landscape

of the Poet's lake-veiled cities, fancy filled up the outlines that reality seemed to touch with pencil trembling as it paused. And the timid tints—faint-hued beneath the shadow—won new life from the depths of a freshened feeling linked with the scene.

The cold grey eyes that now looked on the prospect seemed to gaze on it with untouched earnestness. No softening influence subdued their keen glance, which peered with searching gaze, not alone on the far hill, and the sleeping vale, but on the hedges by his side, and across the near ravine that pierced Hendon. All around was calm and still.

On this very night Mark Graydon was in a fever of impatience. A very important and perhaps final hearing of the suit was to have taken place during the

past week in London, and any evening after Tuesday he might have heard the tidings. Even on Monday evening he hoped against hope that some news would come. He indulged in a well sustained controversy with Bill, as to the possibility that a letter might come that evening, explaining satisfactorily, that if Mr. Renwick had written an answer immediately on the decision—had dispatched it by a special messenger to the General Post-office—and if the mail coach had made a good journey, it might be very possible and quite practicable to receive a letter on that evening. This theory was very pleasant, and led to many remarks from Bill, and many deep reveries in Alfy, but was dissipated by the return of little Jemmy Morris from the Post-office of Manordean, with the tidings that there was no letter that evening. Manordean itself not being

a post-town, its inhabitants had to travel some miles to L——, for their letters; but should they not be impatient, nor their correspondence important, the twice-a-week postboy, a punctual and painstaking pedestrian, satisfied the majority of the Manordeanites.

"I'm sure, Merle, there's a letter this evening. Something is telling me there is."

As before, Mr. Graydon was pacing up and down the little parlour. This was his invariable evening habit. His walk extended, with unconscious preciseness, from the oak press to the little recess where the books were piled on two shelves; and as he again and again approached each of the objects bounding his walk he would abstractedly regard them as if they might by possibility help him to a solution of his difficulties: for Mark Graydon was almost

continually in perplexity. With his little ones he forgot his griefs, but when he commenced his usual promenade he was sure to be puzzled by something or other; and the children forbore to interrupt him saying:—"Come away, Alfy—Papa is thinking;" and quietly they would steal out of the room; and wait patiently until their father felt sufficiently perplexed to give up musing, or sufficiently satisfied to feel no necessity for it; and, in either case, he joined them; in the one case, for a relief—in the other, for the indulgence of his joy.

As he referred to the letter his voice was hoarse and husky.

"Your cold is not better, sir," said Merle, who sat at the window.

"I'm afraid not, indeed. But what do *you* think? Is there a letter, do you think?"

"Mr. Renwick is generally punctual."

"Are you obliged to go to the office again Merle?" said his father after a pause.

"Yes. Sir Horrace himself is coming down in a few days, and we are hard pressed to have all the accounts and reports ready—I may not be home till after twelve."

"Twelve! Good heavens, how hard you work.

"Oh! it is only now and again that I have such hard work. But you are fretting about this expected letter: could not Georgy walk to L—— for you?"

"Georgy—Georgy—" he said musingly, "I never thought of that. Perhaps 'twould be too far for him. Call him.—we'll see."

The little fellow soon entered the room. "Georgy, my boy, would you be afraid to go to L—— for letters?"

"No, Pa."

"It is now four o'clock, Georgy, and you ought to be at L—— at six. I'd go, Georgy, but Merle won't let me; I have a cold. Now, George, if you do this message well I'll give you twopence next Sunday; and if you bring me back good news I'll give you sixpence."

The little fellow's heart leaped with joy, as he sprang about the room—getting his cap, and coat, and muffler ready. In five minutes he was on his way.

It wns ten o'clock. The night was gloomy and cold, though it was but the beginning of August. On a bye-path leading from L—— to the cross roads of Horslarge, about two miles from Manordean, little Georgy Graydon walked manfully on. Yet the poor little fellow was heartily tired. He had reached L——

much earlier than his father had anticipated —had gone immediately to the Post-office, and joyfully paying one and fourpence had got a most business-like looking letter, which he knew was from Mr. Renwick. His joy at this success—his sure and certain hope that the letter contained good news— and the prospect of the sixpence—("the twelve halfpence," as he always remembered)—which were to reward his good fortune—all gave him a fever of excitement which continued while he wandered about L—— looking at all the shops and staying for a very long time opposite one that contained several most temptingly printed fairy tale books. Many an hour was thus spent—and whenever fear of his father's displeasure would recur to his thoughts, he remembered the missive he bore, which he knew would purchase pardon for even much graver offences. It was past dusk, and nearly nine o'clock, when

with unaffected reluctance he left that grand town—(where he imagined he could live for ever—and where all the boys who did live there must be so happy—seeing it every day)—and slowly set out on the way home. The letter was closely secured within his breast pocket, and to make it more sure he closely buttoned his little round jacket, and then kept his left hand upon it, lest some unruly gust of wind should snatch it from him. Another consideration for him was the possibility of robbers. His readings of romance had given him an immense stock of ideas respecting the unscrupulous ferocity of that class of people; and he could make but little distinction between Italy and England whenever the subject of highway robbery was introduced. That there was a regularly organised band of robbers near every "moor"—and that such band always

had a "captain" and a "cave"—and that some of them were very mild and others very ferocious—were firm articles of his belief. The occasional outrages which disgraced the north of England at that time, gave a colour even to the most exaggerated ideas of childhood—and when Mr. Graydon would read out on Saturday evening from the county newspaper, the details of some new burglary, Georgy would fasten the bolts and bars of the windows in his little bedroom with as much security as his and Jack's exertions could effect. As he now plodded wearily along the path, the thought that robbers might attack him gave him a consciousness of his own importance which vastly consoled him in the midst of a fear lest they might be very numerous, and so cut off all chance of resistance or escape. In his own valorous resolutions he had calculated that he might possibly defeat two—but three, would, he thought be

tough work—and four would certainly beat him. And then he clutched the letter tighter, and, trying to whistle a lively air, went on. He held his father's cane in his hand. He had got it as a special privilege —and he now held it soldier-wise as a musket on his shoulder—then trailed it as pike; and then bringing it to "the charge," transfixed an imaginary Frenchman with the visionary bayonet affixed. Since he left L——, he had met but few—the road not being generally travelled—but he thought it quite necessary and prudent to conceal himself as quickly as possibly on the approach of any suspicious looking stranger or ferocious looking old mendicant, which latter class was somewhat numerous in the neighbourhood. His efforts at concealment were generally however ill-timed, for he rarely thought of it until those whom he would avoid were within a few yards, and could easily mark

the hasty flight over the road-side fence, and his supicious avoidance of the main road. Influenced by this among other motives, he had chosen a bad bye-path in preference to the fair open road.

He had just climbed a stile which stood across the path, when he distinctly heard the sound of approaching feet. Meeting a traveller on the open road was but a bagatelle compared to meeting on this lonely bye-path, and past nightfall, men, who according to Goorgy's decisive conjecture, must be robbers. Trembling for the safety of his packet, the little fellow retired to the stile and recrossing it quietly, stepped aside for about two yards, and flinging himself among some tall rushes that grew there, lay with panting heart as the coming steps sounded nearer and nearer.

To his dismay the steps stopped opposite his hiding place. He looked cautiously

up: and still unseen, saw Mr. Rochford and a strange man, sailor-like in garb and gait, engaged in earnest conversation.

Mr. Rochford had fastened his horse to a tree stump, and walked up and down. He came close to the stranger and said:—

"I must hear from Marshall—but you may know something that will set my mind at rest. Do you come from Scarboro'?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you land in the "Seagull?"

"Yes, sir."

He bent down and whispered.

"I know all, sir," said the stranger. "Everything is ready on our part. You have but to have men and horses at any place Marshall appoints, and we'll keep a sharp look-out, and let you have every cask, as quietly, as safely, and as drily as if there were never a King's man in York-

shire. It will be my last job, and I'll do it with clean hands. Well, sir?"

"How many casks are there?"

"Three hundred and ten, sir."

"That's bad—I paid for more—but Marshall is not to blame," said Rochford, musingly. "You may go," he said, turning quickly, "Quick! quick! some one from L—— is galloping up the road. Take this. Be here to-morrow night at half-past eleven."

The stranger quickly bounded over the low fence and soon disappeared.

Georgy crept away and still keeping the bye-path, sped rapidly home.

Mr. Rochford remounted, and turning one quick glance at the coming traveller, walked his horse in the direction of Manordean. Soon, the other horseman, who rode full speed, came thundering behind; as he came nearer, slackened his speed;

and as he came alongside called out in a friendly tone, "Good night, sir."

Mr. Rochford turned sharply round. "What! Unthank!" But he neither took his hand off his bridle nor returned the salutation in any way.

"Yes sir, I have been down here for some weeks."

"Ah!" uttered Mr. Rochford, drily.

"A beautiful night sir!"

"Yes."

Unthank remembered Mary Rochford and took fresh courage.

"I have been at L—— sir," he continued "looking for Doctor Saville. You know sir, I suppose, of your sister-in law's serious illness."

"Miss Wormleighton! I knew she was knocked up with a cold, but it is not for *her* Doctor Saville is sent for! Eh!"

"Yes indeed, sir, I am sorry to say. A

most dangerous inflammation has set in. I started at half-past six from Manordean, and have scarcely pulled bridle since."

"Why have *you* been sent on this troublesome journey, Mr. Unthank, may I ask?" said Rochford keenly.

Unthank coloured. "I happened to be at Hillerslie yesterday, sir, and—and—I was asked to go, as there was immediate danger."

"You are very kind, but the servant would have done as well. Is Doctor Saville to come?"

"He is to follow me in half-an-hour."

"This is very strange and very sudden. May I ask, did you see my daughters at Hillerslie?"

"Only Miss Rochford, sir," said Unthank, glad to hear even a civil question from the stern father; "Miss Amy has returned to Melton."

"At Melton, and her aunt ill!" he half muttered. "I must ride on, Mr. Unthank." said Rochford sharply. "Your horse is evidently knocked up. You had better take your time."

"I beg your pardon sir," said Unthank, "but I—I would prefer to get on quick. Really, I assure you I am very anxious to hear how your sister-in-law is. She is a very kind lady—and I respect her very much. If not intruding on you, sir, I would keep pace with you."

Rochford nodded, and on rode both at a sharp trot. There was silence for five minutes, at which Unthank seemed embarrassed. At last he said with a preliminary smile and preparatory gasp:—"Did you notice, sir, a curious looking man—sailor-like, running across the fields about five minutes before I joined you. I cannot tell what he could have been." A pause. "I

thought as I came along that he was talking to you." A pause. "But I suppose he was not. Did you see him, sir?"

Mr. Rochford turned his face away as a bitter frown darkened it. "No—I did not see him," he said shortly.

"He was very strange, sir, I wish you had seen him. He might have been one of the Hawkleigh robbers, though his dress was more that of a pirate."

Mr. Rochford gave a stern stealthy look at Unthank's face, and seemed re-assured, as he traced the usual insipid smile of good-humour on it.

All further attempts at conversation, and Unthank made many, signally failed. At about two miles from Manordean they turned off—and rope at a rapid rate up the hilly and narrow road towards Hillerslie. The avenue gate was open. They rode quickly up. Dismounting quickly Mr.

Rochford knocked as loud a knock as possible on the muffled knocker. The door was quickly open.

"How is your mistress?"

"She is not better, sir, Mr. Field is afraid, sir, that she may not—"

"Is Miss Amy here?"

"No sir, but Miss Mary is in the parlour."

Followed by Unthank, Mr. Rochford walked quickly over the soft carpets—and entered the room.

They found Mary, busy in her quiet way, preparing some drink for the invalid. Her report was not as alarming as the brief answers of the hurried housemaid. Miss Wormleighton was better, and inclined to sleep. As Mary's eye caught that of Unthank, and as she felt her father's keen glance, she was not quite as composed as usual. Unthank had all the appearance of embarrassment. but none of

its reality. He looked always anxious where to put his hat, or how to place his feet, or how to hold his hands; his words came out broken by repeated little races after his breath; but still one could see behind these a quickness of apprehension, an unfailing eye, and a pertinacity of purpose not the less constant, that its manner was wavering and uncertain.

"Why is not Amy here?" asked Mr. Rochford.

"I cannot say, sir."

"*You cannot say, sir.* You cannot say what reason your sister had for leaving her aunt in her illness! Did her aunt wish her to stay away?"

"I don't think sir—I do not know"—and Mary did not look her father in the face. "Aunt said nothing of the kind to me, nor to Amy, I think. Perhaps Amy is to return —she may have only gone for some things."

Unthank writhed in evident embarrassment, as he saw himself an unwilling witness of the domestic misunderstanding. Mr. Rochford was silent for some minutes, during which, he kept his eye steadily on his daughter.

"It seems a little strange, Miss Rochford," he said, in a slow, cold, hard tone, "that you are so entirely ignorant of your sister's thoughts. You seemed some months ago to be most confidential, and now you speak as if she were a stranger"—

Unthank again writhed.

"You mistake, sir. Amy and I have had no estrangement," said Mary.

Mr. Rochford paused.

"I understand—I understand," he repeated. "Tell your aunt I have been here." Good night, Mr. Unthank—or" he added, turning round sharply, "are you not coming also?"

"Oh! yes of course," hesitatingly, "unless I could be of any service to Miss Rochford."

"I can't see," replied Mr. Rochford, curtly. "Can Mr. Unthank *assist* you?" and a sneer emphasised the word.

"No, sir; I am obliged to Mr. Unthank.

"Good night, Miss Rochford."

"Good night, Mr. Unthank."

And again the unwilling Unthank rode out side by side with Mr. Rochford. Not a word was exchanged. Both rode towards the village. As they came to Melton, Mr. Rochford coldly muttered a parting salutation, and after knocking at the gate, was quickly admitted.

CHAPTER XII.

The letter brought by Georgy was decisive, but not as important nor as satisfactory as was expected by the sanguine spirit of Mark Graydon. It was painful to see his hands trembling as he broke the seal, at painful to see his blank face as he mastered its contents. Nominally the victory was his—his claim was declared good and the suit was for ever at an end. But on account of the undefinable perplexity of title, and the plausibility and apparent

equity of the case on the other side, the costs were to be paid out of the estate. The extent of these costs as allowed was enormous, but the extra expenses were still greater—the victory was dearly bought—it left Mark Greydon burthened with a heavy debt, and the chance of paying it off in five years.

The shock to his ever perplexed mind was severe: but almost happily for him his attention was directed from the keen disappointment by the startling presence of cholera in his household. The house was still enough now; happy voices no longer breakthe silence, merry revellers no longer play in that garden, and the sounds of little pattering feet are hushed. The epidemic that had struck terror to many a heart, had not left the Graydon household unvisited. First, one of the happy little group abandoned his joyous revelry—

sat a few minutes silent amid his playmates, until they gethered round him in wonder, and felt his burning forehead with their tiny hands. The next morning he lay stricken by illness. Some persons like to tell the story of suffering line by line—word by word to relate with almost anatomical precision the throbbing of the bruised and torn heart. I wish to hurry over these scenes. Poor Mark Graydon leaned over the couch of his children, with a mingling of hope and fear that was tasking him beyond his strength. His light heart had been made to give pleasure and when it could not do that, when there was no room for pleasure giving, when he had to walk about the house with softened tread and to speak in hoarse whispers, his spirits sank.

For the first time for many years, he met and spoke to one of the Rochford family, without bitterness or anger; the

law-suit was over—the Rochfords had lost —and now, while cholera was in the house, Amy Rochford was every evening tending the little sufferers; (the other children were nearly recovered, but Georgy was still ill). She never came except at night-fall. Fear of her father's prohibition, and of her aunt's dread of infection, compelled this arrangement; but she made ample amends for her absence during the day, by the store of delicacies brought to tempt the little convalescent to eat. Here too, she met Forsythe; he and Mr. Graydon liked one another because, perhaps, they were utterly unlike in everything. Forsythe used to stroll down on the summer evenings, and sit in the little porch, smoking his long Turkish pipe, and listening with serene interest to the story of the law-suit. He had heard of the illness of the children, when the rest were recovered

but when Georgy was still ill. That very evening his long legs made a very tall shadow on the gravel-path, and he came out the parlour. A little bed had been made up for Georgy on the sofa, the other children were up stairs. Mr. Graydon, Merle Graydon, and Amy were in the room (she had just come,) he took no notice of them, but walked direct to the sofa and looked steadily at the little patient.

"Don't wake him, he is asleep," said the father. "No, poor fellow," said Forsythe, "but he is trying to bear his headache."

Georgy opened his eyes and smiled a sad funny little smile.

"That's a brave fellow, George, we'll get you through this: what has he taken?"

Mark Graydon pointed to a bottle. Forsythe looked at it, tasted it, and put it down. He took up the little thin hand, and then said, "I shall be back in ten minutes."

We should only weaken the story by telling the details of the case. To Georgy it seemed as if from the moment Forsythe touched his hand, there came new life. Amy seemed to herself to think that Forsythe came every day, and by some kind of mesmerism brought colour and clearness back to the little cheeks, and gave strength to the little limbs. Then when Georgy was recovering, Forsythe, usually so cold and stiff, used to take him in his lap, and tell him wondrous stories. They were intended for the child's ear alone: the room was small, and the rest could not help hearing them. But Mark Graydon was now weak and peevish from indefinite illness. Merle Graydon was always busy over papers, and Amy at her work ever and anon giving Georgy some refreshing fruit or cooling drink, was the other listener. What wonderful stories they were;

so childish and yet so good. Amy often wished to ask were they out of a book or did Forsythe invent them; but she was only an indirect listener, and she was too old—not enough of a child—to be supposed to take an interest in such childish things. Yet she listened eagerly.

CHAPTER XIII.

On the morning after Mr. Rochford's night excursion Amy was down in the breakfast parlour before her father. He was evidently busied in his room: she could hear him occasionally walking about and moving boxes. At length he came down, some unopened letters in his hand. As usual, he spoke no salutation, but sat down to the breakfast table.

"Your aunt is ill," he said, continuing the perusal of his letters.

"I know, Sir."

"You did not tell me last Friday evening." He paused. "Why are you not at Hillerslie?"

"Mary is there, sir."

"That is no answer. Have you had any difference with your aunt?"

"None, sir. I think she was vexed with me for something at Mrs. Jordan's, for she left without me."

"Ah!"

"As Mary told me on Friday that aunt never asked for me, I did not care to go in to see her if she would not like to see me."

"Indeed! You are very independent."

He was silent for a long time.

"It is no matter to me," he said at length rising, and speaking very slowly; "but if you have any wish to be independent—

really independent—you had better see to your own interest. I'll tell you what it is —you have no chance of respectability or position in life save through your aunt. I was once rich—I am so no longer. To-morrow's chance may leave me a beggar—worse. If to-day you think it an advantage to have a father to protect you—you may to-morrow be glad to separate yourself in name and habitation from him. I stand on the brink of ruin and disgrace." Amy started. "Why do I tell you this?" continued the merchant impetuously, "because I wish to show you that you have no hope or home but Hillerslie. And yet you calmly and capriciously abandon your aunt —your benefactress—and sit contented beneath this roof as if it will last for ever. You may wish for an independence other than that depending on your aunt's will. I do not see any chance of it for you.

Placed as you are here in a small country village, surrounded by persons who have always regarded you as having wealth and position, and who could not understand any intimacy with you without those advantages—I do not see any hope of your being able to indulge those wishes for perfect independence that seem so natural to you. Your friends the Maplesons, the Smiths, or the St. Legers, will be very glad to receive you on endless visits, while you have Melton or Hillerslie to return to—but go to them as a friend wanting a home, and you will see the difference. The young men who surround you, and who speak with such interesting contempt of wealth—see will they pay the same respectful attention when you can no longer dress richly, or command a carriage. Wealth may be despised in itself, but wealth commands the pleasant kindliness of others—it gives us

leisure to cultivate refinement, and *you* will admit, these are not to be despised. I do not speak my own sentiments. I speak to *you*. It seems cold and hard to take this view of the world," (he continued, speaking very slow, and in his uninflected tone) "but depend on it there can be nothing pleasant 'without the unattractive solid basis' of reality. The free air, the fields, and everything beautiful, are common to all, but who enjoys them most? Is it the outcast who has nothing else for a domain? No, but the leisured wealthy, distracted by no mean thoughts of where his dinner is to be procured, or where he may lay his head. Woman must think of this also. *You* must specially think of it. Your aunt's wealth and partiality for you opens to you a path. Take it. Think no more of me. I ask from you no filial affection. I cannot provide for you as a father should: it would be

unjust to ask from you any sacrifice. As I told you, my position is uncertain. I do not wish that this comfortable house, these solid walls, should deceive you. They are no longer mine. You must exercise your own skill to save yourself. It lies between Mary and you. I cannot interfere, I cannot assist you. A woman should know best how to fight her own battles. Your aunt is an eccentric woman. Depend on it, if she makes Mary her favorite, she will not do it by halves. While she liked you she could not tolerate Mary. In like manner, if Mary remains at Hillerslie, *you* need never go there. You are shocked at this. You need not be. We must all work for ourselves. You must supplant Mary, or Mary supplants you. Mary sees this—you, in your foolish impetuosity, do not see it. Go to Hillerslie, see your aunt in spite of your sister—and prevail over her. Hil-

lerslie and ten thousand pounds are not to be despised."

There was such an emphasis in his very presence as he stood by the window, leaning against the shutter, immoveable, the eyes coldly fixed on her, the lips but little moved, and the words as calm and cold as ever, that even when he ceased speaking, Amy seemed scarcely to know it. His being near her seemed as influential as his speaking. But she was thinking not on the words she had heard, but on their tone and spirit. No words she ever heard seemed so revolting to Amy. They echoed a part of her own unuttered thoughts in such a coarse, cold, repulsive tone, that she seemed to have fallen beneath all feminine delicacy and fine feelings. Was this the contest between her and her sister? A contest for wealth! Yet she felt a subdued gladness. First, there was the secret thought

of triumph as she imagined herself entering her aunt's room and winning her attention and love again. Also there came a strange feeling, hitherto entirely unknown, of interest in her father. He had never before spoken to her of himself. But now he was in danger he said; what could the danger be? He feared disgrace. Then came the consciousness that even the cold hard words he had spoken had a spirit of kindness hardly discernible. They evinced an anxiety for *her* success. Then he preferred her to Mary. It was a great deal even to know that; she almost forgot everything as she thought of it. Perhaps he loved her very much though he did not say it. Oh! if he would but love her, how readily she would give up Miss Wormleighton, and Forsythe, and Mary, and all, to be his companion,

She was silent for some minutes, and then lifting her eyes said:—

"If Mary is very anxious, sir, to be my aunt's favorite, she may be so. I am not so anxious. I am sure, if you were in trouble I would prefer to remain with you, if you would let me, than to be at Hillerslie. I thank you very much, sir, for what you have said—"

"I do not want your thanks; you entirely misconceive me. This is no time for any heroics or sacrifices—you are no young lady in a novel who gives up thousands as quickly as the writer writes ten words. You have before you a world where this childish nonsense is of no value. I do not want you to be with me in trouble. You would but add to it by your silly affectation. Can you not speak sense, and consider this matter as one of your own interest?"

Amy at first felt hurt and a little tear started to her eye. But she repressed it—she was piqued at her father's coldness,

and there was some keenness in her tone as she said:—

"Is it not just as good, sir, to let Mary have my aunt's wealth? Mary is your daughter, too. And then I am the younger —I have no right. If you would prefer that I should get it—I think 'tis unjust."

"You are very impudent,'' he said quickly —but not in anger; "You are very obstinate. Obey me without question. Go to Hillerslie —see your aunt,—and do not return—"

As the distant sound of the avenue gate being opened was faintly heard, Mr. Rochford started and rushed to the window. He looked out long and earnestly, but again returned.

"What is it, sir?" asked Amy alarmed.

"Nothing—nothing; go to Hillerslie— as I have said. And do not return."

For the first time Amy noticed that her father was deadly pale.

"I do not like to go, sir; you do not look well. Are you in trouble?"

She approached him. He waved her away with a sudden frown and clenched teeth. His eyes were bent on his letters.

"I will go, sir," she said. standing near him, and a sudden foreboding crossed her; "shall I see you again, sir?"

"Perhaps not"—he uttered mechanically.

—"Oh;"—

"Nonsense, of course you will—Go! Go!"

"I am going, sir, I am going," she uttered hurriedly in reply to his look—"but kiss me, father, but once and say, 'good bye.'"

He bent down—kissed her forehead—waited for a moment, as he looked at her, his keen look scarcely subdued except to the dear deceit of Amy's loving heart, and said "Good bye, Amy—Now, go."

And if she had received a kingdom, she could not have left the room with happier

heart or lighter step, and her eyes flashed gladness through her tears as the unwonted kindness of the words echoed in her ears.

"Oh!" thought she, as she reached her room, "even if all trouble and sorrow come upon us—I can bear it. He has said these few kind words and I am so happy! What a child I am—at one moment so sad—and now so cheerful with scarcely any cause—I could forgive any one now!"

She thought of Mary and her aunt and said to herself—"It is so despicable to be vexed about my sister nursing my aunt instead of myself; about not being sent for by an old lady, full of whims and absurdities. Yet, then, aunt has been so kind, I cannot give her up so; and I thought Mary so good, so unselfish!—it may be all my passionate temper. I'm very passionate—I should not have said such things to Mary—it was very wrong."

CHAPTER XIV.

Amy sat in her old "pet" seat by Miss Wormleighton's window: in the very seat she always occupied whenever she wished to demonstrate domestic discontent. In fact, the seat was a sort of family Mount Aventine; and a retirement to it used to strike terror into the ruling power and her lively little lictor Fido, who, when Amy was gloomy, got gloomy also, and sulked under the table in a spirit of gloom fit for any Christian. Amy had her bonnet and

shawl on, too; and, though her aunt had given several hints, had not taken them off, wishing to preserve for some time the appearance of a mere casual visitor, who had no notion of stopping beyond the half-hour. Miss Wormleighton herself was perched up on a high-backed and high-seated chair; and she knitted away, with more energy than judgment—if one might take tangled threads and retracted stitches as criteria of injudicious haste. On the old lady's line-worn lips was a comical expression of starched composure and resigned, restless melancholy, that one moment made Amy laugh, and then pained her heart as she thought her aunt was sincerely sad. At the other window, Mary Rochford sat working; her eyes now and then quietly scaning her aunt's face, and then half turned towards Amy; and the inspection which Amy could feel as she knew Mary's eye

was on her, gave the younger sister an impulse of impatient anger she but little repressed.

Her aunt and Amy had been conversing; each with a dissatisfied tone of mock coldness and distance. One could easily see through it; it was but the parleying before reconciliation. Mary's quick, quiet eye easily saw through it: but her face betrayed neither joy or vexation. Occasionally, however, when Amy's tone would relax into something friendly, Mary would look up earnestly, and Amy would then elapse into her hostile tone, and say something saucy that again set the old lady's lips stitched up into a twist expressive of everything but happiness.

"You seem very fond of the Smiths lately," said Miss Wormleighton, with a scornful toss of the head. "You went home with them the other evening."

"*Mrs. Smith* was kind enough to offer me a seat in her carriage," retorted Amy; "and I felt thankful for it; left alone, as I was, I had no fancy for going home with young men."

"You do not like many of them, I suppose," said her aunt, in a sarcastic tone. "One is enough. When persons do not keep with their own friends, it is no wonder they should be alone. Of course, you prefer Mrs. Smith to any of your relatives. She is not weak and delicate, and she need not go home early; and she is strong, and can amuse a young girl. You do right, Amy to seek your own pleasure," and the poor spinster's voice quivered a little; "What matters what I think or say?"

Amy felt the hot blood rush to her brow, in shame. She turned a glance really painful and penitent towards her aunt:—"You know, aunt, I do care for what you think"

—(Mary moved her chair forward, as if to listen)—but—but—(in a quick tone)—I was not to watch every movement of yours. I was very sorry you went; but really—"

"I do not want any apology; hold your tongue, child. If you wish—"

"I did not introduce the subject," said Amy, haughtily, as she caught Mary's eye watching her; (She shall see, thought Amy, that I will not whine nor bend, to gain back any one's favour.)

"It's like the world—it's like the world!" exclaimed Miss Wormleighton, indefinitely.

Amy smiled through her frown. "*I'm* not like the world," she muttered half-pettishly but lightly.

"I don't care—I do not know!" continued Miss Wormleighton. "I have not much longer to live, and it does not much matter. When you are old too, you may say the same. Hand me that book, child.

(Amy quickly brought it.) Do not interrupt me. I want to read."

"That's a stupid book!" said Amy.

"Never mind—never mind. I may read any book I like, I hope," muttered the old lady, not lifting her eyes off the page.

"Indeed you may not, aunt," said Amy laughing. "That book would make any one dull. Even you, I notice, are always sad after it."

"I wish to be sad—and I will be sad, when I like. What is it to you, Miss Rochford, whether I am sad or not?"

"But it is, aunt. I like to see you cheerful and happy," and Amy's voice was rising to its old ringing tone, as she stood up and advanced towards her aunt. "Do put by that book, dear aunt?"

Fido jumped up and barked cheerfully. Amy's hand was on her aunt's book, when

Mary said, in a tone so cold and dead that one could not trace sarcasm, "You had better get dear aunt another book Amy!" and then, stooping down, Mary caressed the unwilling Fido.

Amy bit her lip, and stood irresolute. She felt it a relief when Mary glided out of the room, as the old lady hurriedly told her—"Go and see how that young girl, Lucy Miller, is getting on, and then, child, inquire if there are any letters."

Amy then spoke hurriedly; "Dear aunt, I am very sorry you left without me, the other evening; and I am very sorry you have been ill. I thought you did not wish to see me, but if I thought you would have been happier with me attending on you—I would have watched by you—and never left you."

"Who said I wanted you?" and the old lady turned away.

"No one, aunt; but you will not say you did not want me—and I never again will stay away, for I can read in your eyes—that you like to have me here."

"Yes, you have such conceit, you think no one can do without you."

But Amy knew by the tone, that all was forgiven. And she again sat on her little stool.

"I wish to speak to you Amy," said her aunt, in a most confidential whisper, "about something very serious. I have heard something about your father, child, that makes me uneasy. I have heard, on good authority, that" (sinking her voice very low) "he has disgraced his family. Broken the law, my dear; he is a smuggler; and goes out at night in a ship and smuggles! he was seen last night with a party of sailors —smugglers. They were arrested and he escaped; but they have told everything.

He was their leader, my dear; their employer; he has escaped but they have confessed all. The constables are on his track: he will be caught and tried as a smuggler. Think of that, child."

The young girl's brow burned with shame, and a painful throb shot through her heart. She had faintly suspected this. Oh! how sickening was this sorrow! She leaned her hand upon her aunt's lap, and said nothing. Miss Wormleighton was gratified; she liked to overwhelm people with important intelligence, and now she had Amy overcome.

"It is dreadful, child—it is dreadful," she continued; "It is very dreadful for his own children, for sooner or later they must be openly disgraced; but it is worse for me, my dear. The name of Wormleighton was never yet connected with any shame until now; and even now, I will take care no one shall think, that I and

that man—that bad man—are in any way connected."

She paused and stiffened up her shrivelled neck.

"I disown him—I separate from him," she went on. "A smuggler—Oh! When Mary Wormleighton married that man, I told her "Mary,' said I, 'you have brought shame and sorrow on our house; something tells me so.' She would not believe me; I knew her husband better than she; but when I told her not to trust him, she got into a passion. I never spoke to her again. Your father is a very bad man, child—he must be a very bad man. Had he no regard to me? Did he never think *I* had a character to support, and that he was disgracing me?"

And the old lady again paused to take breath.

"Now Amy Rochford," she resumed,

speaking slowly, "what I have to say is this—You must either give up your father or give up me."

"Aunt!"

"I never will see the man again. A smuggler in my drawing-room! If I leave you my money, it is not to Amy Rochford I leave it. I leave it to my niece Amy; and my niece Amy is never more to call herself Rochford—never more to have anything to do with any of the name."

"Aunt, you're not serious!"

"Serious! You are very impudent, child;" and the shaded lines on the old spinster's visage got black, and she looked really repulsive with the stern cold expression of her face. "Serious! I tell you that man has disgraced you, has ruined your prospects. You owe him no respect —no obedience; you must have nothing to do with him—nothing to say to him."

Amy was stunned—bewildered. At length she raised her head, and said:—

"Aunt—my father has acted wrong, I feel; but I should not condemn him—I am his daughter. Nor should you, aunt! All of us have faults——"

"I suppose all of us are smugglers——"

"And my father may have been driven by necessity. He has not shown much kindness to Mary or to me; but he has been a good father——"

"A good father! to disgrace you!"

"For God's sake, aunt, do not speak that way! You cannot think how it pains me to hear you speak so harshly of him. I love him still. I cannot help loving him. If he were a smuggler twenty times, I should still love him."

"Merely through contradiction—merely through contradiction!" exclaimed the spinster, getting red with passion.

"Then aunt, I know he is in danger—he is not well. When I left Melton this morning he looked so pale and worn; I am sure you would pity him if you saw him. And he kissed me as if we were—parting for ever," sobbed out Amy; "and I must go back to see has he returned. I could not desert him; I could not leave him."

"You *must* leave him, girl," screamed Miss Wormleighton. "Do you think I will have my niece pointed out as the daughter of a smuggler? Let Mary go to him; he seemed always fond of her. I do not care for her. I do not care if I never saw her again. But unless you wish never to see me more, you must never return to Melton. You must take my name; we must leave Manordean, and cut ourselves off for ever from the whole set of the Rochfords."

Amy looked steadily at her aunt. At

first she thought that this was but one of her aunt's idle caprices, her reasonless dislikes; but the old lady's face was of all colours, and every fibre shook with passion. Then Amy's blood rose.

"I am very sorry, aunt," she said, in a tone tremulous but decided, "to disobey you, for you have been very kind to me; but my father is ill and in danger, and if I did not leave his house when he was well and rich, it would be base and mean to leave him now. I see you are fixed, I cannot make you change; but I cannot desert my father——"

"Desert him, desert him—not desert him, I suppose, until he is hanged as a smuggler before the town jail."

"Good God!" uttered Amy, in agony, reeling back as she spoke.

"Come child, come child, be firm, be resolute," said the old lady: "never think

more of him—come to me." And she drew the unresisting girl again to her feet. "I will always guard you and love you. Come, we will talk of something else. You look ill. There, lay your head there."

"My poor child I have spoken too keenly to you. Look up, Amy." The trembling limbs of the young girl crouched at her aunt's feet; the face was cold and pale, and the eye meaningless and fixed. Tears stole slowly down the old lady's face. She spoke huskily: "It is dreadful, Amy; it is dreadful, but it can't be helped. If your father be exposed I cannot think of living here. I must leave Manordean, I must leave Yorkshire; we must all leave. I could not go alone; I am too old, too feeble, now to do without company, and I cannot go among strangers, who will not understand me. If your father were another man you need never part from him;

but will you part from me without thinking how lonely and desolate I shall be? I am as much accustomed to you as if you were my daughter; I have depended on you—I cannot be happy without you. Will you let me go alone? Will you, Amy?"

The old lady's manner had changed. There was an unusually natural tone in her voice.

"Then, Amy," she went on, in a stifled, hoarse, low tone, "you can be no good to your father. He is a proud, cold man, child, and it would but add to his shame to have it seen by any of us. As for me, even if I felt no horror at the very thought of seeing a criminal of any kind, I could not support this shock. I should sink under it. I must have quiet; excitement would kill me. What can *you* do for your father? What can you do to comfort him? Your grief—your crying—would but make

his troubles more. Poor man, he thought his daughters burthen enough when he was well-to-do, what will he think them now? Amy, Amy, we must forget that he ever lived, we must never think of the name. It makes me sick to talk of it. We must go far from this; we will live happy together, and think always of something else; I cannot do without you, Amy. I know *that* from the last few days. I scarcely slept at night thinking whether you would come back; and I was restless all day. I have no one but you, Amy; I am not a strong hard man like *him;* I cannot bear sorrow and sickness as he can. Do you remember when your poor mother died? He never shed a tear; he has a soul of iron. Amy, speak, child, speak to me. No blame to you, to be low and sore-hearted to-day; but bear up, Amy—bear up."

Miss Wormleighton herself seemed ill-

fitted to give comfort. Her wasted frame trembled, her voice was lowered to a husky whisper, and the tears trickled down her thin cheeks. Amy still sat on her little stool, her pale cheek resting on her aunt's knee, and her bloodless lips compressed.

"Aunt, I feel ill; I am very faint," spoke Amy at last, in a low broken tone.

"Amy, my child! My God how cold you are! What have I done? What shall I do?"

"Listen, aunt. Do not stir; I will be stronger in a moment. Listen, dear aunt. I hardly remember what you said, but I think you told me not to go to my father. I cannot tell you why, but I must go. While you were speaking I thought I saw him dead, and I feel as if I would wish to kiss his corpse. Everything is so strange to-day; your voice sounds strange, as if it were another person speaking to me, some one I never knew; yet still it is not all

strange, for it is like the voice in which my mother spoke to Mary and me one evening before she died. I wish all were over. It is fearful to feel my heart sinking, sickening; and to feel my brain reel round. I would give worlds to sleep now, and forget everything. But I have something to do. Yes; you told me not to go to Melton. I must. If my father be in sickness or in trouble, I must go—nothing on earth can keep me. To think of his calling for me, asking, 'Is Amy come? and I not there!—I must go at once," and she rose up quickly, and muffled her shawl close around her.

"Amy!" said her aunt, with a slow, solemn, faltering voice.

Amy turned towards her aunt, and took her hand.

"Amy, will you go?

"Aunt, I must—I must indeed. I know not why. I cannot tell you why; but

nothing can keep me. I heard all you said; it is nothing; what is it to me if I am disgraced? What pleasure in the world can I ever more have? Everything is darkened, and everything is bitter. Good bye, aunt. I love you very much; but I must go to him."

"Amy! If you go out that door, you you need never return; you must choose between him and me. Both you cannot have. Oh! Amy, think well on it. What have I ever done that you should desert me? But go—go—kindness is lost on you—you hate me. Go!"

Amy spoke not, but bent down and pressed her aunt's lips. She rose and moved towards the door.

"Amy! my child, Amy!" cried the spinster, in broken accents of pain.

The young girl stopped, but did not turn; and then she passed from that familiar door never to see it more.

CHAPTER XV.

Amy went back to Melton that evening, and found that her father had not returned. He had left in the morning. She went up to his room—it was locked. She went down to the drawing-room and sat in the dusk of the room—liking the gloom that came all around her, like groups of dark shapes encircling her. For the first time she liked Melton; no light airy cottage, no grand house, could then be more welcome than

that old familiar place, so dull, so plain, so quiet.

She sat in the drawing-room for a long time that evening, and far into the night; and though sorrow and pain hung over her, she felt a kind of happiness in her misery. For she was alone, and she loved emotion, and within her was a vague hope that in some unknown way she should bring safety and happiness to her father. She longed for him to come; and yet she half dreaded his coming.

In the morning she was up early; she eagerly asked had her father returned, and was told he had not.

After breakfast she sat at the window watching the avenue gate. Hour after hour passed by; and at length her loneliness oppressed her; and she would have welcomed anything to break the silence and suspense.

At last a horse's hoofs are stopped at the

gate. He is coming. She watched more eagerly. As a horseman dashed up to the door, her cheek flushed with gladness, and her heart heaved. It was Forsythe. She hardly knew why she was glad; but with him was linked happiness, and she seemed to think he could bring it always with him.

Forsythe was silent as he took her hand. She could see that he was sad and anxious. For the moment she forgot her own grief as she thought, "He is in sorrow."

"I am come from your father," spoke Forsythe.

"From my father! You!"

Knowing that Forsythe had never met her father at Manordean, she had never connected them even in thought.

"Your father is at L——"

"And what message has he sent—what has he said."

Forsythe paused. He knew not how to give Amy quietly and delicately a just idea of her father's position. Before he left L—— that morning, he had learned all the particulars of the night encounter, in which the smugglers employed by Mr. Rochford had been arrested. Rochford had been known; and if seen, his arrest would have been immediate. Rochford himself thought but of flight. By a few questions Forsythe saw that Amy more than suspected her father's guilt; the pallid cheek and the painful silence but too well told her shame and sorrow. In a few words Forsythe told her of the dangers that encompassed her father. His manner, Amy thought, was singularly forced and cold. As he concluded, she rose and said, "I must go to L——, I must see my father," and the words were spoken in a hoarse, low tone.

Forsythe seemed disturbed, but his tone

was cold; "I think you had better not. It may be dangerous for you to be seen: it would lead to your father's arrest. If you wait until evening I shall send a messenger and conveyance for you: and you can see your father to-night."

Amy sat down—and a painful thought crossed her. Perhaps he dreads to be seen with me; to be the companion of a felon's daughter. The thought was bitterly painful; there was no balm for a sorrow so cutting. How cold too (thought she) is his manner. He sees me in grief, but he speaks no word of comfort—or friendliness. It must be. He shuns familiarity with the daughter of one degraded.

She had thought as she left her aunt's, that her cup of bitterness was nearly full. Here was another drop, the bitterest of all. For even then she had said, "Forsythe loves me; and no change in worldly circum-

stances, no disgrace to our name, can alter him." And she fancied his arm sustaining her when sorrow would overpower her, and his voice speaking still with that firm manly reliable tone she so much loved. And now all this was but a dream. He was changed—changed utterly. And the idol she had worshipped fell.

He rose to take leave. Would he even now speak? "There are a thousand things I would say, Miss Rochford," spoke he with a stifled yet firm voice, "but I cannot. I leave England in a few days."

She started—but was silent. He continued.

"I will not—I cannot—say why I am compelled to this. I am driven on. To avoid this I should have altered long ago the whole course of my life: it is now too late to speak of regret or retractation. We must part."

Though Forsythe had never spoken one word of love to Amy, yet Amy felt this attempted exculpation of his silence and departure natural. In her own heart she had so frequently given him the post of her protector and comforter, that his abandonment of it seemed strange enough to require this defence. But her blood rose as she thought, "He despises me; he thinks it degrading to associate with me." She rose quickly to her feet. Her burning brow seemed to have dried her eyes—they were tearless.

"Good bye, Mr. Forsythe," she said coldly and abruptly.

He gave a keen inquiring glance; and his lips quivered with a painful struggle, Amy preserved cold composure.

"I shall go to L—— this evening;" she continued in a tone quite calm and firm,

"but you need take no trouble. I shall arrange all myself."

Forsythe well understood her. He muttered "You are right," and then said in a tone which struggled to be firm—"I wish you farewell."

He reached out his hand; he grasped hers, then let it drop—and left the room.

He was gone, and to Amy's aching vision there was nothing but sorrow around her. He was gone. He had failed—he had fallen. Yes, he did still love her. Woman's quick eye could not be mistaken. He loved her—but he feared the world. A felon's daughter was too low to be his bride. And this was he whom she had imagined in her waking dreams as one who could brave disgrace, poverty, death itself, on behalf of one he loved. And it was the thought of *his* love that had sustained her; on which she had built happy thoughts of happiness

to come. She remembered how she had pictured him in all scenes still by her side; in all dangers more than soothing her fears; in the deepest agonies sweetening the bitterest cup presented to her lips. And now he was gone—without a word of courage—of hopefulness, of comfort—gone—and all hope, all strength, all support gone with him.

She sat where she had sat when he had left the room; on the sofa, her head resting on it: sunk in a torpor of grief—her thoughts scarce active—a dull senselessness bringing a merciful monotony to her mind.

She was roused by a light step near her. She looked up. Mary's arms were around her.

Mary soothed her—but a-half hour passed before they could speak calmly.

"Aunt told me something last night," said Mary; "and a messenger from L——

brought the news into Manordean this morning. And the people are talking of nothing else but of my father's being a smuggler, and of our being disgraced." Mary's eyes were red with weeping; and her hair was but hastily arranged.

"Aunt is leaving for Scarborough to-day," she continued; "though she is scarce well enough to walk. And I have come down to bid you good bye."

"You! Are you going?"

"Yes—we must go. What is the use of staying here? As I came up hastily through the villiage, I could notice that two or three, whom I met by chance, avoided me. You ought to come too. Aunt is very angry with you—but if you come she would not object, I am sure."

"And will you go without seeing my father?"

"If I could be of any use to my father--if I could be of any comfort to him—I would go to him. But I could not. And aunt said if I went to my father I should never return to her house."

"I do not care for that," said Amy, firmly, but in a subdued tone. "I never shall see aunt again; but my father I must see."

For more than an hour the sisters sat silent and weeping, clasped in each other's arms. Mary promised to write in a week, and Amy was to write as soon as she should see her father.

As Mary went out of the door, it relieved Amy, again she was glad to be alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mary had not long left, and Amy was sitting near the window dreamily gazing down the short avenue, when she saw the gate again open, and at first she thought, It is Forsythe come back. It was Merle Graydon. He lifted his hat as he passed the window.

When he entered the room, Amy noticed the very sad expression of his pale face. She rose to receive him, and he with much more haste than usual, advanced quickly

towards her and caught both her hands.

"Amy, my dear cousin, I am so sorry to hear all this—so sorry for your sake."

She sat down, and he looked pityingly and steadily at her.

This did not quite please Amy Rochford. In her former pride of beauty, she was quite conscious that Merle Graydon was slightly in awe of her—was generally not quite at ease in her society—rather apprehensive of her repartee, and excessively anxious to win her smile. It did not quite please her to see him at once assume so much ease—she knew he meant it kindly, but his tone was too calm and patronising. She said rather coldly—

"It is not of myself I think so much. I am bewildered—I cannot understand it—but my poor father—he was so proud and lofty, he must feel it so much."

Merle said nothing.

"I would give worlds to be with him; he never much cared for our companionship —of course a man like him so full of business, and so clever, could not find much society in girls like Mary and me—but now that he is in—now that he is—I mean he might want us more, and we might be more useful to him at present than ever before. Don't you think so?" and she looked up appealingly—for she was speaking very earnestly, a quick flush coming at some words.

"Of course." Merle spoke quite coldly.

Amy was chilled by his tone, and both were silent for a few minutes.

"I thought you would have gone to Miss Wormleighton at once."

"Mary is there, and besides father——"

"Then you are alone here. Could you not go over to our house. I am not staying there, as I am obliged to sleep in Mr.

Larpent's house while he is away—but my father, and Georgy, and the rest would be delighted to have you, and old nurse would make you comfortable."

"No Merle, thank you, I could not think of it."

"If you heard them rattle on, talking about you, and telling stories about your rescuing Jack—and vowing impossible achievements to make you happy!——Do Amy, go over there. It will cheer you up —I know you like the children, and they will jump with joy to have you—"

"Don't please, Merle—don't ask me. It would do me no good," and her voice trembled a little, "it would only make me weak and tearful to meet so much love and kindness, and now I must be strong, and hard, and brave to comfort my poor father. It is *I* who must do everything for him."

"Why not Mary?"

"Mary is with my aunt; besides, my father likes me best, and I could not be happy unless I could do something for him."

Merle got up, and walked up and down the room. He was dressed in a brown surtout, and when his back was turned, he looked a man of thirty-five, and when in his walk his fresh, comely, honest face met the view, it was grave; but there was the youth of a calm heart still in the unwrinkled cheek, and clear, quiet eye.

He sat down again, and looked as before, steadily at Amy, who, with her hands clasped before her, had remained in an attitude of musing—evidently forgetting that any one was in the room.

"Amy, I wish I knew how to speak to you."

"To speak to me!" and she looked up.

"Do you think I can see you thus sacrifice yourself——"

"But I like it—"

"You can do no good to your father."

"I can comfort him."

"Amy, listen to me. No matter what happens, your father's reputation is injured; why link yourself to all the scandal and ill-fame of this affair, when you cannot alter the result?"

She only shook her head by way of reply.

"I wish I had some right to remonstrate. I wish I was something else beside a distant cousin—would to God——"

He stopped—and she was silent, and did not even ask him by a look to go on speaking.

"Amy—I guess what you may answer, but do not interrupt me." He got very red in the face, and went on—"You knew long ago that I think no one in the world like you—I am not like men who can

speak finely; but I would die to make you happy—upon my soul, I would."

No one could mistake the way in which his voice, so deep and firm, gave out the words.

"I know you are far above me—you are all grace and beauty: to me you are like an angel, and I have felt the skirt of your dress touch me, as if I were not worthy of the honor. On my faith, I have felt it—I do feel it. I can hardly hope ever to be so happy as to make you my wife—it would be almost too much happiness—but now Amy, would it not be some comfort to you to have some one to love you, and fight your battles for you with the world, now that you are alone. Oh! Amy, if you could only love me a little."

He had spoken passionately, and almost in one breath. She had given one look at his crimsoned face, and then she had hidden her face in her hands.

"If you would only say that you love me a little, I know that even a little of your love would be so true and faithful that I would be more glad to have it than the whole love of other women."

"Oh! cousin Merle, I do love you—I always loved you—you are so good to me, so kind to me—but now do not speak of it—"

"We should be so happy if you would only consent—I have thought of it so long, but I have been so poor that I would not ask you until I had done something more for Georgy and the rest—but you might live with us. They are at school all day, and would not annoy you," continued the pleader, in his simple-hearted earnestness.

Amy was sobbing. (Alas! she was in tears because she was thinking how differently Forsythe had behaved. If *he* had only said half this.)

"I have two hundred pounds saved, Amy. We could furnish the farm-house at Grasslands; I have a promise of another agency —and I am sure you would bring me good luck."

His voice had got cheerful as he had spoken without any resisting rejoinder; when suddenly Amy remembered that while she was thus listening, her father was in jail. The tone of her cousin's voice jarred on her recollections.

She looked up at him through her tears, and then dried them.

"I wish, Merle, you would not speak so. I feel so thankful to you—you are so good, you deserve a better wife than I can ever be—but even if I ever thought of——of—returning your—affection—I could not now. For heaven's sake, do not talk of happiness and cheerfulness while my father is in prison. I am his daughter, Merle, I never

can forsake him. I love you as a cousin—but do not think of me as you say."

An expression of acute pain, and then a sudden blank despairing look, passed over poor Merle's face.

"Do not think, Merle, that I do not feel how noble and good you are—"

He tried to speak, but his voice was hoarse—he waved his hand to her, as if not to speak on, but she continued—holding his hand in her's:

"There is no one in the world I like and esteem so well. Do I not see every day what you have done—what you have borne for Georgy and the little fellows—I have seen you coming day after day from your office, your face looking so wearied from long work, and I have so pitied you. Oh! Merle, if I had ten thousand pounds, I would give it all to make you happy, and to bring joy to the little darlings at home.

But I cannot be false, and a hypocrite. It would be very cruel of me to go to your home without—without—I mean that some girl much better and wiser than I am, will love you, and make you happy. I so wish you were happy."

The truth spoke in her frank, loving voice.

He took his hat from the table, and rose to go away.

"Amy, I can wish that for you, but how can I hope it? You ruin yourself for a man who never knew what it was to love his wife or children——"

"Hush, Merle, hush."

"Why should I be silent," he cried, passionately. "Not to speak of yourself, look what your father has done. By keeping up that cursed lawsuit so long, he frittered away the estate, and the result was ruin for my father and for himself. He

broke your mother's heart—you cannot deny it. He did everything to make you and Mary unhappy—and now, when he is in jail, he wishes your happiness—your reputation—to be sacrificed to his comforts."

"Merle, do be silent: he is my father."

"Would to God he were not!" the young man continued with some bitterness. "I do not often speak of myself—I am not much I suppose, in your eyes—I am not clever. Yet for the last four years I had a little dream of happiness—I worked on, saving more every week, and thinking of you—I became grave and heavy, as people said, and yet I was always thinking of a pretty little parlour, with you in it—"

Merle Graydon stopped abruptly: his voice failed him.

Amy was deeply touched. She felt how noble and how perfect was the love thus

offered; she knew how much happiness she could confer; her father and Forsythe were remembered but faintly, and her impulse was to reach out her hand and say, "I love you."

Had Merle Graydon looked at her, he would have read her thoughts in her deep, earnest eyes fixed on him, and in her glowing cheek; but he had worked himself into a rage with Rochford, and he almost forgot his companion. He continued speaking with angry bitterness:

"I never knew a man more thoroughly selfish—more thoroughly unprincipled—"

Amy bit her lips, and felt her loving impulse checked. Then she got angry. She had expected that Merle would have read her thoughts (Forsythe would have done so) but Merle was too practical for that.

"Merle, do not speak that way of my

father," she said abruptly, her cheek flushing.

"Speak of him! I must speak of him," and Merle Graydon usually so quiet and mild, seemed carried away by passion. He spoke thick and rapidly. "You may be angry with me—I cannot help that—because I gave information to Searle, as doubtless you have heard—"

"*You!* information to Searle!"

"Yes! why not? I have known for the last two months that your father was a smuggler," continued Merle in a raised excited voice. "I warned him; he would not listen to me, because I was Mark Graydon's son; he defied me to prove it. By mere accident Georgy overheard your father and a stranger plan this last affair; he repeated their words to me, without knowing their meaning. I wrote to

your father, warning him; but I also wrote to Searle, thinking——"

Amy stood up, and her eyes flashed fire.

"Merle Graydon, leave me; I do not wish to say anything to hurt you, but leave me: you are my father's enemy: I love him, I cannot love you. If my father is disgraced, so am I; I do not want you to share that disgrace:" and she turned away with a bitter smile on her lip.

Merle was still angry—but a dreadful sense of his desolation came over him. He simply said, "Very well; be it so" and without a word of leave-taking, left the room.

Amy felt annoyed at having turned him off so abruptly; she knew how much he loved her, and she knew the pain she had given him. She shed some natural tears, and then thought, "When will Forsythe come?"

As evening approached, Amy made inquiries as to a conveyance to L——. There was but little difficulty in obtaining it. The only posting establishment in Manordean had such little custom that that those who occasionally troubled it with an order were never disappointed. To avoid observation, Amy gave orders to have the chaise drawn up at about half-a-mile from Manordean, on the L—— road, and that shortly after nightfall she would overtake it. She intended to seek her father at his office in L——, forgetting the improbability of his remaining there while in danger. But, as she left the house, her servant put into her hand a paper that Mr. Forsythe had left, on which was written a particular street and direction in L——. This, Mr. Forsythe directed to be given to Miss Rochford when setting out for L——. Amy supposed that Forsythe had ommitted stating

me that several reports have been circulated."

"That I am a smuggler?"

Amy paused, and then gasped out, "Yes sir."

"A murderer?"

"Oh! father!" and she flung herself into his arms—her head resting on his shoulders.

"Come, Amy!" said the father firmly, "You should not have come here if you can do nothing better than weep." He placed her on the sofa by his side. "I am glad you have come; not that you can be of any aid to me, but that I wish to speak of your own prospects. Have you seen your aunt since this occurred."

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"My aunt left for York to-day."

"Ha! Did she ask you to go with her?"

"No, sir. But she commanded me last evening not to see you again."

"And you have come. You are a little fool! Did I not tell you to follow your aunt's will? And now, I suppose, you are never to see your aunt again?"

"I shall not regret that, sir, if you let me stay with you."

"Stay with me! Where, child? I suppose you think you might stay here!"

"Here, or wherever you are."

"Do you know whose is this house?"

"No, sir."

"It is Mr. Forsythe's."

"*His* house!"

"Will you take it on you to ask Mr. Forsythe's leave to stay in his house?"

"I see you are bewildered," continued Mr. Rochford. "This is Mr. Forsythe's house. On the evening on which I was wounded in that affray, of which

you have heard enough, I was returning by stealth to L——. Mr. Forsythe had been out in the country seeing some poor cottager in fever. He found me almost fainting in the street. He brought me in, dressed my wounds—watched over me—in fact, has been very kind. He leaves England himself, he tells me, in a few days: but he has promised to provide me with all means of escape."

Her father's words but added to Amy's bitterness. Forsythe was not cold or heartless as she had tried to believe; but he shrank from an alliance with a degraded house. Could she trace in his acts or words, some falsehood or meanness, it would almost comfort her to think him unworthy; but to hear of his good acts added to her bitterness of thought.

"I feel very thankful to Forsythe," said

Rochford, musingly, "and so should you. Have you met him frequently?"

"Yes, many times at Manordean."

"Do you like him?"

Amy started.

"I do not know him very well," she said hurriedly.

"You evade my question. To my mind he seems an educated gentleman of fine feelings. I can also see that he takes an interest in you."

"I think you mistake, sir," said Amy, earnestly. "Mr. Forsythe and I have met often—but—but—"

"But, what?"

"We are but acquaintances, sir, and—and—"

"You would say, he does not love you?"

"He does not, sir—I am sure he does not."

Mr. Rochford paused.

"I may be mistaken," he said, slowly, "but it is strange if I am. I feel convinced that Forsythe loves you. I was speaking to him—you need not start. I did not ask him to love you—I was speaking to him of my family, and of some Manordean people, and I could watch him, when I spoke of you, even casually; his cheek did not flush, but there was a flash in his eye, I could not mistake. He loves you."

Spite of her better judgement—spite of her own heart, which told her this was false hope—she still clung to it. It was so strange to hear such glad words in the depth of her gloom.

"Now, Amy," continued Mr. Rochford, "if Forsythe loves you, and asks you to be his wife, I think you ought to accept him. It seemed to me, by the way he spoke, as if he had some fear connected with you —some dread that disturbed him. Perhaps

he fears rejection. While you remained Miss Wormleighton's favourite, I never interfered with you; and I never cared whether you rejected twenty suitors or accepted them. Now—but where is Mary?"

"She has gone with my Aunt."

"Ha! I said so. *She* did not think it necessary to see me. She was right. Every one but you acts sensibly. But as regards Forsythe, I would advise you to accept him—if he propose. I must leave England if I can. There will be some difficulty. Dangers surround me. In any case, whether I go or am arrested, you are unprotected. You could have no better protector than Forsythe."

"But, sir, you are entirely mistaken—"

"I think not. Leave the matter to me."

"I entreat you sir—do not speak to Mr. Forsythe about it."

"You need not be alarmed. But you

are not to stay here. I must go over to Manordean to-morrow evening, some hours after nightfall. I want to arrange some papers. You must return there this evening, and, on to-morrow evening, be ready to open the little gate, leading up from the meadow. I shall steal round by that way —and I can trust none but yourself."

The merchant gave many more directions, and it was at an advanced hour in the morning, as Amy, muffled closely up, left L——, and, returning in the same chaise, was driven rapidly towards Manordean.

CHAPTER XIX.

When she awoke the next morning, the events of the last two days seemed to Amy like a dream. They had been so crowded, so startling, so strange, that she could hardly look on them as real. But the sorrow, which like a dark cloud, overhung them all, too well marked them as real, and her own sinking heart told her that they were no imaginary griefs. The most painfully saddening sense of sorrow is that which comes accompanying our

waking thoughts. It is so natural to expect renewed vigour, life, and cheerfulness as the morning sun streams through our windows, that the pain and sadness which come then are doubly felt. It seems, too, so unnatural that it should thus be renewed; that not even the sleep which rests the wearied limbs and soothes the overworked brain, has not quieted that demon care—that dark sorrow—which meets us at our bedside, and blots the light with its hideous presence. As first the soft shadow of sleep is withdrawn from the soul, it leaves a soothing whisper behind—a whisper that seems to say, "The past is at rest;" but then comes a vague pain to the heart, and suddenly a sense of real substantial grief starting up anew.

Through the dull long day, Amy sat in the drawing-room. The blinds were down. Outside, the rain beat with an occasional

sad patter. Pain preyed upon her heart, and tortured her yet living hopes of happiness. Pain, like fire, must have somethiug unconsumed to prey on, else it dies; were there no happiness to be burned away, pain would not exist. When pain destroys all thought of gladness, it then dies itself, as a fire goes out when all the wood is consumed. Then comes over the heart a funeral pall of feelingless vacancy, and the spirit slumbers. But Amy had within her still some living hopes of happiness that might come. She was too young yet to despair.

She fashioned that happiness a thousand ways.

At one time she dreamed of her father and herself in quiet and happiness in France. She pictured for herself a sunny sky, a rustic cottage, tranquil thoughts, and a life passed amid scenes sweetly

picturesque; while day by day her father lost his stern coldness, and loved her warmly and truly.

Then she dreamed of Forsythe added to the group. He should live with them. Her father and Forsythe would talk of England in the morning, and then when the evening would come, she and Forsythe would sit in some window, and talk in a low tone, holding one another's hands, of the stars they had seen that evening at Manordean. And they would tell one another what their secret thoughts were on every occasion they had met. And Forsythe would give a full explanation of why he was so cold and distant on that day at Melton; and the explanation would be such as to make her love him more and more.

Then again she thought that one day Forsythe and she would return to England.

And what a paradise was then pictured in her dreaming thoughts! How far, far into the future did her fancy pierce; and how distant was the day when the brightness should fade or grow dim, or any wrinkle cross that brow she loved to think upon, or that eye whose light gladdened the deepest thought of her heart!

With those, side by side, came other thoughts, sinking deeper and deeper, because edged with pain.

Evening came. Amy hastily put on her cloak, and having sent one of the servants on a message into the village, she stole round to the meadow which stretched behind the orchard. She ran through the wet grass, and soon reached the little wicket her father had spoken of. She opened it and looked along the path he was to come. She could discern nothing;

and then closing it again she sat down on the large stone by the side of the gate, and her limbs shook with the chill air from which her cloak did not protect her. She looked keenly around. There was no sign of life; the lights in the village gleamed dully: and the distant bay of the farm-dogs up on Hendon sounded but faintly. The sky was darkened and dreary. Occasionally the wind swept by, rushing over the hedge with a heavy trailing sound. As she again looked she could mark a dark figure moving quickly towards her. She recognised the tall form and the heavy step. It was her father.

She unlocked the gate and stood in the passage. He approached, and without speaking, took the key from her, and entering the meadow re-locked the gate. He took her arm, and both trod on towards the house.

"Has any one called to-day?" he said, anxiously.

"No; I have been alone all day."

"We must be very cautious this evening. No light must appear in the front of the house. The hall-door must be bolted; and we must sit in the back study, so that at the least noise I may fly by the side entrance."

In a few minutes, the doors being secured, Amy and her father sat opposite one another in the study.

After being briefly engaged for an hour in the examination of some papers, Mr. Rochford raised his head and said—

"Forsythe did not call to day?"

"No, sir."

"Then my plans must be altered. Forsythe is to leave England to-morrow, for ever, as he tells me; so we must think no more of him. I must then arrange for

some place where you can stop. I leave England in a week at farthest."

Amy was silent for minutes, her head downcast: the tears quickly stealing down her cheeks. She tried to speak firmly as she said:—

"Will you not take me with you, sir?"

"It cannot be, Amy."

"I do not ask anything more than to attend on you, to help you, to assist you, in any way that I can lighten your burden of loneliness and exile. You are leaving England for ever. I, too, wish to leave it. It is no sacrifice to me to go. I have nothing to regret. My entire happiness for the future is the hope that I can add to your comfort. Of all who bear our name you and I now alone remain to one another. Let me love you, sir, and make you happy. I will not intrude on you. I do not ask your confidence. I ask but to

be near you, sometimes to see you, sometimes to hear you say that you are not sorry that I have come."

She spoke quickly and earnestly, her hands clasped in supplication.

Mr. Rochford looked steadfastly at her pale face, and as he did so the rigid brow relaxed, and the firm lips parted. He was about to speak, when a sudden knocking at the hall-door made him start to his feet. One hand resting on his chair, the other on the table—his attitude like one preparing to fly—his face firm and resolved though anxiety well marked it, he stood silent for some seconds. Then to his quick ear came the sound of many footsteps in the avenue.

"I am lost," he said in a whisper. "Soldiers surround the house!"

Amy could not speak. Her heart seemed

to cease beating, as she stood statue-like and chill gazing on her father.

Again the knocking resounded through the house, and now louder and louder.

Mr. Rochford sprang forward, secured his cloak which lay on the sofa, fastened it around him, pressed down his hat on his brow, and then looking at Amy, stood irresolute.

"You must stay here," he said quickly. "If the orchard is not guarded I can escape. You can then leave the door opened, and—answer nothing."

Before she could reply he crossed the hall; descended the flight of steps leading towards the side door—had his hand on the latch—but then paused to listen.

His head was bent down for minutes; when he again raised it, and returned to the parlour.

"All is over," he said quite firmly; "the

house is surrounded. I must surrender."

The servant stood in the hall irresolute and waiting for orders, while again and again the knocking reverberated through the house.

"You may open the door," said Mr. Rochford.

Amy crept round towards the sofa, near where her father stood, and rested on his arm.

"May I go with you?"

"To prison, child?"

"Yes, anywhere."

"You cannot, Amy; your strength is not sufficient."

"I am quite strong; I am pale, I know, but it is only nervousness—I am quite strong now." And she tried to smile; but as she heard the door open, by a great effort she sustained herself on her father's arm.

A sergeant and a constable entered the room.

"You are our prisoner," said the latter, quickly grasping Mr. Rochford's collar.

"Take her away, Martha," said Mr. Rochford quietly, as he felt the burden on his arm grow heavier; and Amy, now happily insensible, was removed.

[illegible] I must surrender."

[illegible] stood in the hall irresolute a[illegible] for orders, while again and again the knocking reverberated through the house.

"[illegible] open the door," said Mr. [illegible]

[illegible] moved towards the sofa, near which the latter stood, and rested on his [illegible]

"[illegible] with you?"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible]"

"[illegible] your strength is [illegible]"

"[illegible]: I am pale, I know, [illegible] my nervousness—I am quite strong now." And she tried to smile; but as she heard the door open, by a great effort she sustained herself on her father's [illegible]

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CHAPTER XX.

The next day it seemed strange to herself how calmly she bore the fact of her father's position. She felt as if she were heartless, and she thought that she ought to have cried out, ought to have wept a good deal, ought to have been in an agony of grief. But she felt stunned more than pained; she seemed to walk in a dim dream; nothing had the fresh sharp reality of waking life. There was a little cottage upon Hendon Hill —a tiny four-roomed house, of which her

aunt was the owner, it had been vacant for some time, and Miss Wormleighton had been furnishing it for the summer for herself. She now wrote from Scarborough to Amy, telling her to occupy the cottage. Amy took no notice of the letter, but in two days after, Mrs. Jarvis, an old servant of her aunt's who took care of the cottage, came in to her, and advised her to come out. Amy had a vague resentful wish not to be indebted to her aunt, but the old housekeeper pointed out to her that the furniture at Melton House would be sold off, and Amy went upstairs to pack her trunks. She felt as usual dull, and was not much grieved at leaving the old house, but when she had done packing she stood at the window of her room looking out, and she saw one or two sparrows that used to come every morning for crumbs of bread. She thought just for a moment that they would

keep on pecking and pecking at the panes the next day and no one would give them anything, and she felt more inclined to cry than she had for days. She would have cried, but she thought it would be childish and so she went down stairs silent, quiet, and tearless, but feeling as if a weight was on her heart.

"I'll not go by daylight, Mrs. Jarvis."

"No dear, Joe will bring down the cart for your things, and you and I will walk up in the dusk."

Amy wandered about the house all day in and out of all the rooms, and sitting down when she felt tired. There was no one in the house but herself and a little girl of ten, who was now busy in the wash-house—so that Amy had free range of the house. She sat down for a time in the parlor and tried to think—but after thinking out a delicious dream, she lifted

her head, drew a long breath, and rose from her chair. She walked up to a little mirror in the kitchen, looked very steadily at her own face, put back her hair from her forehead, and tied more neatly the ribbon around her throat. While doing these and other trifling things she still felt a gloom over her; she knew she was walking through the valley of the shadow of sorrow, and she gave herself up to the darkness. But while thus surrendering herself, she seemed to live a quiet under-life of subdued thoughts not all dreary.

Mrs. Jarvis came in the evening, Amy had been waiting for her a long time very impatiently, for she had something to say to her.

"Mrs. Jarvis, have you any money?"

"Me, Miss?"

"I mean any money you could lend me.

If I had money I could take lodgings in L——, and be near my father."

"But, Miss, your father said you were not to go, and he wrote to me not to allow you—and your aunt—"

"My aunt—yes I know—but if I were at L—— my father would not turn me away. He would see me every day."

"There's no use talking Miss; come on or we'll be late."

They went out by the little side-gate, and keeping along a path that ran nearly by the river, they soon passed the last straggling houses of the village. It was a heavy evening, with rain overhead and a fitful whistling of the wind among the branches of the trees. They met no one except two of the young Smiths who were standing smoking cigars outside Mrs. Pennant's cottage. Luke Smith called out, "Hallo, good night, my dear," not knowing

Amy in her long cloak, and thinking it some passing servant girl. Amy bit her lip—she knew it was a mistake, and that Luke Smith would not dream of insulting *her*, yet she was so over-charged with pent up feeling that she burst out crying. Mrs. Jarvis, poor soul, was rather afraid of Amy, and only said, "Now Miss Amy dear—" and Amy tried to choke down the sobs which like a child's, came panting breathlesly. When they reached the cottage Amy soon went to bed and forgot everything in sound sleep.

The next morning, before she was up, a letter came from Forsythe. It was very pleasant to see his hand-writing, and she held it tight in both hands, looking at it closely before she opened it. As she lifted herself partly in bed, the clothes fell from her left shoulder and as she raised them up again, the hand that held the letter rested

in her bosom, and it seemed, though it was not, as if she pressed the letter to her. She smiled at the idea of doing anything so romantic; she would not have done it deliberately for the whole world, even when thus alone. She could not help having an undefined feeling that reading Forsythe's letter at this time and in this way, made the letter seem, though it was mere fancy, more intimate, more affectionate, more like a lover's letter. That his letter should be thus admitted to her pretty little maiden bedroom, seemed to herself as she looked at its bold masculine superscription a kind of privilege to high, even for him. But this was merely a thought and she opened the letter. It told her that her father was well, though downcast; and that Forsythe himself, who had heard from Mrs. Jarvis of her intended change of residence, would be at the cottage that evening. As Amy read that her

father was in bad spirits, she contrasted his cheerless prison-room with her pretty cozy little bedroom, and felt sore at heart.

Forsythe came in the evening. She was in the garden at the back of the house and by the stream—the little Hendon, which here, not far from its source, ran through the little garden, a very tiny rivulet. She had been taking a walk and had a thick shawl and her bonnet on—as she looked at some plants which looked sad and broken after a cold and rainy night. The little stream too was swoollen and muddy. She knew Forsythe's step on the damp ground. As he shook hands with her it seemed as if he dropped her hand rather quickly. (But then that was always a fault of his. She remembered one evening Mrs. Pennant rallied Forsythe on this peculiarity and how he excused by saying he was never "quite at ease" in society—at which they

all laughed, he was always so cool and self-possessed, even to hardness.)

"Your father seems in better spirits," said Forsythe.

Amy asked several questions and at last both paused—and Amy said hurriedly—

"But Mr. Forsythe what will happen?"

"How?" asked Forsythe, looking at her upturned face and appealing eyes.

"I mean—the trial—is there any hope of— of—"

"I do not think he can be acquited," said Forsythe, gloomily.

"Oh!" muttered Amy involuntarily, in a kind of suppressed groan. She turned her head aside.

Forsythe looked at her at first lovingly and tenderly, and then his lips trembled. He walked away a few paces and came back. He stood before her his chest heaving—

"Miss Rochford—Miss Amy Rochford—"

She did not stir, and he paused. Over his rather coarse features there passed traces of an emotion mastering the countenance so as almost to take away all its familliar aspect.

"Why should I tell you? And yet you have been so kind to me—I am a weak coward, a fool—and I am the most miserable being in the world." He spoke in a loud harsh tone.

Amy burst out sobbing.

"Good bye," he said hastily, "I will see your father to-night; I will do everything for him; do not be uneasy." He stretched out his hand—and Amy, with her head still turned away to hide her red and tearful face, gave him her hand. He held it for nearly a minute, but did not press it, and then again saying "Good bye," left her—walking very slowly up the garden-path.

She went to bed, thinking as much of Forsythe as of her father. She tried to think more of her father—but after giving up her thoughts to the prison, she found herself in a few minutes thinking of the little riding-whip Forsythe had in his hand, and wondering whether he had ridden over from L——, and whether the horse he rode was his grey horse, or that bay mare he rode when he called that morning at Mrs. Jordan's.

Two days passed away, and Amy heard nothing from L——. Two dreary days in which her thoughts varied every half-hour, but more gloomily as time wore on, bringing her no sustaining news.

On the evening of the second day, she went to bed as weary as if she had been engaged in the most bitter toil during the day. It seemed to her that she was awakened in the middle of the night—

she started up, and Mrs. Jarvis was at the bedside with a candle.

"What is it Jarvis"? said Amy with terror in her eyes.

"Mr. Forsythe Miss."

"Oh! my father."

"Your father's quite well, but Mr. Forsythe wishes to see you."

He came with sad tidings, Amy read them in his face, but her very worst fear—her unuttered horror—was not realised; her father had been sentenced to transportation for life.

CHAPTER XXI.

* * * *

The sisters had breakfasted—Mary was out, and Amy was alone in the little parlour of the Cottage. The blinds had been down; she raised them up; and for the first time, for many mornings, looked steadily at the earth and sky, as they seemed to celebrate their bridal with mutual beauty. The old sense of happiness, at the loveliness of nature, came to her with the freshness of a new thought. "Can I be called unhappy." thought she, "when my whole frame thrilled

just now with the rush of glad feeling?" She sat down opposite the open window, and dreamed of a life all quiet and inert—an existence all tranquil thought and observation—the life merely of a looker on—gladly and quietly living on for years unchanged in some secluded sylvan scene. Her dreams passed. She remembered what she was—where she was. She was alone, unprotected, with a disgraced name, with few friends. Miss Wormleighton had never written—never sent since Mr. Rochford's conviction. Mary had come, had advised her (not pressingly), to go see her aunt; but reported the old lady's dislike and anger as unchanged, unabated. Independently of the barrier thus placed, Amy shrank from the thought of dependence on one she could now no longer love. She had more than excused her aunt's foibles and caprices; but when she saw eccen-

tricities assume the form of coldness and indifference, she felt an estrangement, an aversion she could not conquer. Then, there was another reason. Mary had told her but very lately, that she and Unthank were engaged; that her aunt had given her consent; but that the marriage was posponed for a twelvemonth. Here was an arrangement of happiness and harmony that quite excluded her; and that her presence would, in all probability, disturb. She felt that her reconcilement to her aunt would be no partial one, if effected at all; and she knew that Mary and Unthank should consider her as a rival. With her recollections of the last interview with her aunt, were linked a thousand bitter thoughts of the hatefulness of the rivalry she then found herself engaged in; and now, when she had been steeped in sorrow to the lips, and her heart had been almost numbed

by the violence of the blow which had well-nigh crushed it—she quietly put aside from her any thought of a path that would lead to new emotions. The untried heart of the young girl had thirsted for emotion; now the experience of years had been crowded into months, and she shrank shuddering from any disturbing thought.

She resolved to seek relief from thought in toil.

Some days after her father's conviction, she received through the prison chaplain a packet. It contained many papers, and a few words of farewell. The papers she was directed to read, when she should be compelled to think of her future path through life. She read them now. They gave her counsel and assistance. They recommended her to seek out a subsistence in London; directed her to apply to a

merchant in the city, who had sold some of Mr. Rochford's merchandise, and held the proceeds; to request from him the amount, which might be fifty pounds; and to ask his advice, whether she might not obtain employment in some capacity not menial. These were the entire of her wordly prospects. The merchant might refuse to account for the money received. There was no legal claim. But Mr. Rochford's letter represented him as a man of probity and kindly disposition, and Amy thought that surely none could be so cold and hardened, as to think of visiting the sin of the father upon a daughter, helpless and deserted. She thought, as all in sorrow think, her own claim to pity irresistable.

When Mary returned, Amy was sitting at the table, all the papers before her.

"You had a letter from aunt, yesterday?" asked Amy.

"Yes."

"What does she say?"

"She asks me to return."

"You, alone?"

"Yes."

"I have been looking over these papers that my father left, and I find that he advises me to go to London. Some merchant there owed him money, and I am to apply for it. It may be fifty pounds—and if I get it I must try and obtain employment as a governess, or as a seamstress."

"To London!" said Mary, musingly. "It is a large place to be alone. I wish you would come with me to Scarborough."

"There is no use in thinking of that, now. I have no wish to intrude on my aunt. She has no wish to see me. I must trust to myself entirely for the future. London is very large, but I can teach something. I can sew and embroider—I can, if I wish,

work hard; and if I succeed in getting this money, I can live on for a long time."

"But if you do not get the money——"

"Well—I have five pounds now. It will cost me three pounds to go to London, and still I will have something left."

Mary was silent for a long time. "I am frightened, Amy," she said then, "at the thought of your being alone in London, but I cannot see what to do. I'll tell you what I think. You know aunt cannot live very long, or after a time, when Henry and I are married, she may like to have you again. Then you might come, we should all be happy. Or if aunt dies, you should come at once to me—you would be welcome to me wherever I should be—and we might be happy again as we were before—long ago, I was about to say—but it is not long ago."

"No, Mary, that plan is not good. I

know you love me, and we both love one another as sisters should; but I think it better we should be separated. I wish to be away from everything that can remind me of what has passed. I could not for a kingdom sit down again with you, and take up our old life. Then even if I could get over this feeling, there is Unthank, your husband. If I will not accept a favor from you, surely I could not from him. I could not enter his house. I cannot tell you why I form these resolutions; I feel a repugnance to be dependent on any one, and I must, if possible, make out a new life for myself—something entirely new—entirely cut off from everything I have ever seen. I know, Mary, it is kind of you to offer me this; it is, of course, what a sister should do, and I should think it strange had you not done so. But it is of no use. We must be separated. We will

write to one another. I have a presentiment that I can work out my own life—that at least I shall earn my bread—and that I can forget everything but the necessity of working day after day."

Mary seemed neither startled nor surprised at her sister's resolve. They talked much more, a great deal about London; of persons they had known there; of the probability of Amy, in her poverty and humble position, ever meeting them; of the far future, when both of them should grow old; "and then perhaps," said Amy, "we may see each other. I might come some day to your home, to see you much altered, and to find grown up girls calling you mother; and to talk with you for a few hours of some things that have passed."

CHAPTER XXII.

While the two sisters were talking—they sat together near the window. The servant came in and said :

"Miss Amy, there is a man below—a strange man, Miss,—he wants to speak to you, and please Miss," she continued turning to Mary, "your aunt is coming."

"My aunt!" exclaimed both girls.

"Her boxes have come on from the coach Miss, and she will be here in half-an-hour

she stopped in the village to see Mrs. Jordan."

Mary jumped up. "Oh! Martha, get ready my aunt s room—and take down these blue curtains, (she hates blue)—and light a fire—and get a cutlet with tea—there's a good girl—quick." And Mary hastened out of the room, with her quick yet sure manner, her rapid but unhurried step.

Amy looked after her for a few minutes, and stood irresolute like one in a dream, in the centre of the room. Martha looked in again.

"Please Miss, the man said he was so anxious to see you.

"Oh! I forgot."

She went into the hall and across it to a little room opposite the kitchen. A man sitting there—a coarse-looking common

man rose, taking off his hat. He held out a letter, "From your father, Miss."

She bounded forward—tore it open.

"Oh! thank God—thank God," and her face was scarlet, and her eyes danced with joy—.

"Oh! father, father!" and she put her hand to her heart, which seemed to make her frame shake with its pulsations—then she started—and called as she ran out of the room—"Aunt, Aunt, Mary, Mary."

Before she could leave the room a hand held her, and the messenger stopped her.

"I ax your pardon, ma'am but it is a secret—your father is not quite safe yet."

"But he has escaped."

"Yes, but they are on his track, and if it gets spread all about Manordean some people might take to prying here and there and searching up and down—do you see, Miss?"

Amy turned quiet and grave—yet still very hopeful. She smiled—as she said "I am very foolish—and I have never thanked you—I have never rewarded you for bringing me such news"—and she fumbled for her purse. She took it out; there was only a shilling in it. "Wait a moment." She ran across the passage up the stairs into her bed-room, and was back in two minutes.

"I have no money now about me—but you deserve everything—here is my watch—it is very valuable they say—keep it—my father says here," and she kissed the letter, "that you helped him—God bless you," and she caught his rough hand and pressed it.

The man got very red, tried to speak, but looked quite grim in the twitching of his face, and with an awkward bow left the room.

Amy was left alone, and re-read her father's letter:

"*My Dear Child—I have escaped and am on my way to London. Follow me as soon as you can. Get money from your Aunt for the journey, but if she still prefers Mary, do not let it fret you, you and I shall manage better. In London enquire at the General Post Office for letters addressed to Miss Jarvis. They will tell you where I am. The bearer is a faithful fellow who has helped me to escape, and as he can neither read nor write, I entrust him with this letter. Burn it when you read it.*

J. ROCHFORD.

Forsythe is a first-rate fellow.

While still reading, Mary came into the room.

"Aunt wishes to speak to you, Amy."

Amy looked up, such joy was in her face that Mary started back, and said:—

"I suppose you will make it all up with her Amy, and I and Unthank—"

"Kiss me Mary. My dear girl," and Amy laughed loud and merrily, "you may keep all the old Aunts in the world and every Mr. Unthank that ever lived."

"Amy you are mad!"

"Yes, wild—listen you stupid, heavy, quiet girl; let me whisper it to you; father has escaped!"

"Oh! Amy," and Mary really looked glad.

"Yes, quite free—none of that horrid convict dress and convict ship—and I am going to him—"

"Are you?" and Mary looked glad—"you are such a good girl Amy—father ought to love you so."

"Ah! if he only would! Here, read this letter and then burn it—I'll go to my aunt."

Amy prepared for a cold stormy scene

with her aunt, and she entered the room with a prepared and quiet aspect; but her aunt was near the door and folded her in her arms close—quite close—before Amy could speak. Amy saw that she was quite restored to her aunt's love—and forgetting her father for the moment she rejoiced. But then she thought, with a little touch of sadness, that she must soon sever the re-united bond.

The talk between the two was long and earnest. Miss Wormleighton heard of Rochford's escape with surprise and even evident annoyance. "Are you not glad, aunt?" asked Amy, indignantly. "Y—es," said the aunt gloomily. Then Amy told of the summons to London, and the poor old spinster shook with passion. "The bad, bad man;" and she repeated the phrase over and over again with a mechanical shake of the head, which looked like palsy.

Amy tried to persuade her aunt that something might occur to bring her back—but she must go to see her father—and she soothed the old lady with lavish caresses. Far into the night they talked, while Mary sat alone in the parlour, very quiet, and writing a letter to Unthank. Mary had great confidence in Amy's filial love, and she wrote to Unthank, that it was beautiful to see it, and enlarged upon the happiness to a daughter of sacrificing everything for the author of her being.

In ten days after, Amy and her father were sitting quietly at breakfast—in a back room in Kentish Town, London—the father having first given his daughter a full account of his escape from the county prison.

Forsythe's money and tact had managed it.

"Is Mr. Forsythe suspected by the

police?" asked Amy. "Yes, perhaps," was the hesitating reply, "but they have nothing positive against him. I have advised him to keep quiet; he lodges in the next street. I thought if he would take a passage with you and me in the 'Mary Jane,' we could all three land at Rotterdam quite snug."

"With us! come with us?"

"Yes—why not?"

"It would seem so odd."

"Not at all—here he is—I hear his step."

Forsythe entered. He shook hands with Amy, nodded to her father, whom he had seen early in the morning, and sat down opposite to Amy.

"Well, Forsythe—have you decided?"

"No!" said Forsythe, with a half-smile, "my old vice, I am always balancing between two opinions. I have nothing

special to do here—and I would like a trip on the continent. The only business I have left in London, is to decipher a mystery—look at that letter."

Mr. Rochford took it—and Amy rose to leave them alone. She said in a confused way some words of thanks to Forsythe for his services to her father—some words she had been conning over, and his eyes brightened as he took her hand and pressed it warmly.

When she left the room Rochford said "Oh! some miserable imposture," and he gave back the letter.

"I think I know the writing; it looks as if I saw it years ago—and as the walk is not far I may as well go and see the poor creature whoever she is."

"Well, as you like, but I would not go following every begging letter of the kind

to its ragged source—every man to his taste; will you dine here—?

"Yes—but your daughter looks pale, and you would be both the better for a walk. Take a stroll with her towards Hampstead Heath this evening at four o'clock, say—it will be nearly dusk—it will give you an appetite—and as I will then be returning from this excursion (holding up the letter) I will return with you—."

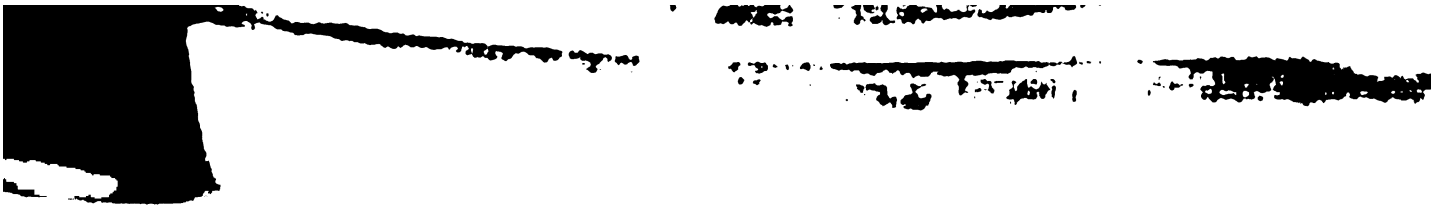
And he left the room.

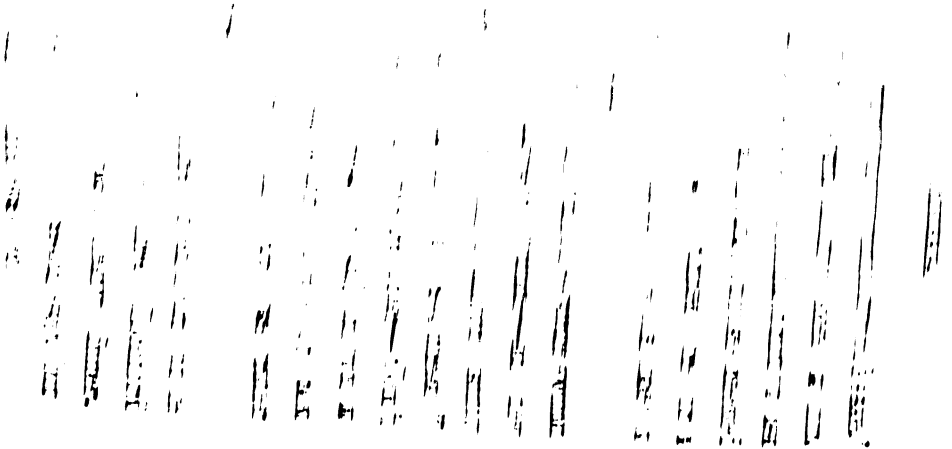
CHAPTER XXIII.

Amy said in after life that nothing in the whole world seemed so pleasant to her as that walk home from Hampstead Heath. Forsythe had joined them, said a few words about not having found the person he had been looking for, and then walked on by her side, she leaning on her father's arm. Forsythe soon led her on to speak of Manordean, and she noticed with such joy that all the little incidents of their meetings where remembered by him. He spoke in

his usual quiet tone—indeed rather more subdued—but under all there seemed a current of real cheerfulness, only repressed as if it were certain in the future and need not be enjoyed in the present. Everything said on both sides was grave and sometimes even sad; nothing provoked a smile —but Amy felt so quietly happy, as if there was coming not joy but that sweet satisfaction of the heart, better than any joy. She did not think that evening—she felt. Insensibly her step grew lighter—she lent less on her fathers arm—and when the conversation paused for a moment, she found herself half-smiling, she knew not exactly why. Forsythe's voice took more and more of the conversation, and she gladly listened.

A very hurried step sounded close behind them, and they all turned round. A woman rushed up to Forsythe.





"Take a glass of wine Amy; you look pale. Forsythe will be here presently. Bring your chair round to the fire."

Amy did so, but sat so that her face was in shadow.

"Well Amy, do you think anything better of Forsythe now."

"I wish, papa, you would not talk so; I am of course very thankful to Mr. Forsythe."

"Ah! women, women! I can't make it out. I wish, though, you and he could understand one another. I am sure he loves you; I watched him."

Amy in her corner was quite silent.

"I have half a mind—— Hah! here he is;" as a hurried knock sounded at the street door.

Amy rose, kissed her father and left the room; she went up stairs to her little bedroom—looked at herself in the glass, put on a little cerise ribbon neck-tie, hoping

her father would not notice the change—and then sat down. She heard Forsythe enter the room where her father was.

She had not noticed a letter on her dressing-table until the lodging-house servant coming in, directed her attention to it—saying she had just brought it up from the Post Office—the letter was directed to "Miss Russell," the feigned name agreed on by Mary and herself when she left home, to prevent the police tracing out her father's residence. It was in Mary's hand-writing—but even while she opened it, she stopped to listen to the voices below. The letter soon absorbed her attention. She was startled by the tidings. It told her of the cruel blow that had fallen on "her aunt Wormleighton." She had learned that the money she had trusted to Mr. Rochford to invest, had never been invested—"She of course accuses my father of

everything bad," wrote Mary, "and I can say nothing. She entreats of me to write to you about it, as she thinks you can find out from my father what he as done with the money, and if there is any chance of getting it back."

Amy sat down sad and confused; she felt that her father had taken the money—and she felt keenly grieved that the poor old aunt to whom she had been long attached, should suffer so, especially by the blow that had fallen heavily enough on all.

Mary's letter continued:—"The loss of the money seems to have driven poor aunt distracted, and I do not wonder at it. I really believe she had nothing else to support her, besides this money, and now that it is gone she has only some thirty or forty pounds, which Mrs. Jordan returned her the other day. She has taken a most unaccountable dislike to Mr. Unthank; she

makes me quite angry the way she talks. She tells him before me (I think she is losing her senses,) that she knows he only cared for me on account of my chance of money I had from her, and that now he had better go at once. Unthank bears with her very patiently. *I* know that Henry loves me for myself; he told me so last night. I am sorry you and he could never like one another—but I understand him—I know he is not a *beau-ideal* and all that nonsense—and that he can't talk fine romance like your great friend Mr. Forsythe, but I like him better—and to tell you the truth, Amy, I have heard things about Mr. Forsythe that are very bad, and you ought not to think any more of him."

Amy frowned and bit her lip. "Dull, stupid girl!" she muttered, "as if she could understand Forsythe!"

She read on. "What I heard was something that our Jane was telling to the servant next door. I did not intend to listen, but the window was open and they did not know it. They spoke about shocking things—things that you and I would never talk, or even think about, and so plainly. If Mr. Forsythe has done what they say, *I* never could love him."

Amy's cheek was burning with shame and anger. She listened again to her father and Forsythe; the voices were high and she heard her father say "this very night!"

In a postscript Mary wrote. "Aunt is very bad this morning—Dr. Jephson came, and he says her nerves are frightfully shattered, and that she is in a very bad condition. She looks frightful—particularly in an old plain night-cap she will wear—she will not let me get her one of her lace caps; she says she cannot afford it."

While Amy had been reading, Forsythe and Mr. Rochford had been engaged in a hurried colloquy.

"I have heard unpleasant tidings," said Forsythe, as he entered the room.

"The devil!" said Rochford, "are we discovered?"

"No, not that I know—though by-the-bye two suspicious-looking people were prowling about the house when I came in."

Rochford started up—opened the back window, stepped out on a small terrace and returned in a few minutes.

"A few steps," he said, "takes me into the next garden—from that, by starting along a path almost covered, I gain the third house; it is empty, and it has an area opening into the bit of waste ground we came round this evening. The roof of the house also communicates with the roof of

the dissenters' chapel, and once on that I should never be tracked."

Forsythe listened impatiently. "Yes—yes, it seems all right, but I must go—"

"How—are you suspected?"

"No, but I must leave London."

"You promissed to embark with us."

"So I intended—but something has occurred."

"You desert us—" and Rochford suddenly raised his voice, "desert me—desert my daughter after trifling with her affections."

Forsythe started, and his features moved as if he were repressing a very strong emotion.

"Mr. Rochford, let us part friends. There is no one on earth to me like Amy Rochford: would to God this night I could call her my wife."

"And why not?" said Rochford.

Forsythe started. "I must go."

"Now."

"This very night."

"This very night?"

"Leave me your address—have you any money?" asked Rochford eagerly.

Forsythe took out a twenty pound note. "I had intended to share this with you, but I can get more; take it all—good bye —tell your daughter—"

Amy entered as he spoke.

Forsythe advanced hurriedly and spoke loud and quickly, as if trying to keep down any weak feeling.

"Good bye, Miss Rochford, God bless you; your father will tell you."

She suddenly turned pale, but, still bewildered, stared at him.

"If I ever see you again—"

She spoke not, but her look was more fixed. He said in a breath "I cannot bear

it—good bye." He caught her hand, kissed it hurriedly, and was gone.

"A mean shabby scoundrel!" said her father.

"Father!" said Amy, indignantly.

"What can I do with twenty pounds?"

Amy was not listening. She suddenly asked, "Why did he go?"

"I cannot tell," roared out Mr. Rochford with an oath, "You ought to have kept him if your pretty face and nice little figure were worth anything. Perhaps he has bailiffs after him. Perhaps that woman who took him off this evening wants him for some old love of his, (Forsythe was wild enough when he was young they told me in Manordean,) or perhaps the police have tracked him about my business."

"Then you should not speak of him so—"

"Hallo! What's that?"

"What?"

"That noise—listen."

The hurried shuffling of feet in the passage was heard: Rochford sprang to the door and locked it.

A voice outside called out, "Open the door in the king's name."

Rochford bent down to Amy's ear and whispered, "Speak to them." He then walked stealthily but quickly across the room, took up a cap and cloak, and without making the least noise disappeared through the window, closing it after him. Amy followed his movements for the minute and then called out.

"Who is there?"

"We want Arthur Rochford, we are constables."

Amy opened the door. "My father is not here; he has gone away."

She then sat down. The constables

searched the room. She looked up, but felt too weak to stand up. She still held Mary's letter in her hand, and as the policeman did not speak to her, she looked at it as if reading it. The letters formed themselves into Forsythe's name; she felt as in a dream, that Forsythe, her aunt, her father, and Mary were mixed together—giving a sigh, she leaned back and fainted.

When she recovered the landlady was bending over her—the constables were gone.

During the next week Amy remained at the lodgings—expecting every day to hear from her father, or, as she whispered to herself from Forsythe. But no letter, no message came.

On the fourth day there came a letter with a black seal from Manordean. Amy knew what it was, poor Miss Wormleighton was dead—and she had called for her "own Amy" when dying. Mary wrote with great

CHAPTER XXII.

Amy at once summoned the landlady and paid her her bill. Fortunately it was only two pounds. She then said to her, "I find I must leave you. I want a cheap room, I am a stranger in London; I have but few friends, and I cannot go find them out this evening; I cannot afford to stop at an hotel; could you tell me of some place where I might stay without much expense?"

The landlady looked dark; and then went on in a careless tone, eulogising her own

house—and mentioning how moderate everything was. But Amy spoke again almost repeating the same words. The low broken tone in which she spoke had some effect; the landlady was still a woman; and she called out lustily—"Here, Thomas, take this lady's box over to Mrs. Leonard's, and tell her this young lady wants a room for a week—say I sent her." She turned to Amy, "It will just suit you my dear—you seem tired. And you have no friends, you say—Lord help us all! You'll get the room for a trifle, if you make a good bargain," she added in a whisper, "there now go—there's the boy."

Amy murmured her thanks. In less than a quarter of an hour she was sitting by the small table of a small room, looking out on the roofs, leads, and gutters of a wilderness of houses.

The next morning, after breakfast, she

went down to where Mrs. Leonard sat in state (she was a large, lazy woman,) in a small parlour. Amy tried to adopt a conciliating tone; but found that she had much to learn in the art of agreeable address. She had found no difficulties hitherto in pleasing, it had never been a task to her, but now she could feel that there was a cold, stiff hardness, in her voice and manner, arising from a consciousness of effort, and the embarrassment of having to ask favors. She enquired of Mrs. Leonard the way to Gracechurch-street. It was a long way off she was informed. "Yes," said Amy, "I think it must be. I know Gracechurch-street—but I do not know the way from this." "It will be a good walk there and back," said Mrs. Leonard; "but I'll get you a lad to show you the way."

All Amy's hopes depended on this application. She held in her hand a letter from

her father, written from prison, addressed to the merchant. She looked again and again at the address—and as she walked along, following the short steps of her little guide, she held that letter firmly and closely—it was her only hope.

On still went the little guide—sometimes looking back to see did she follow. On through long narrow streets—through streets where the people streamed by so rapidly—through streets where the sun was unseen, almost unfelt—past many churches —and by the Cathedral—till at length they reached Gracechurch-street. Amy had been often there—it was in the way to her father's office. She walked along all the houses at one side—then half-way up the next, till at length the words "Brettell and Goold," met her on a door plate. She looked at the letter; it bore the direction "Mr. Brettell, of the firm of Brettell and Goold."

In a few minutes, thought she, I shall know the worst or the best. She tried to be at ease and quite firm, as she gently pushed in the outer door, and knocked at the inner door covered with green baize.

She entered. Two gentlemen were seated behind a table—one rose.

"Can I see Mr. Brettell?"

"Mr. Brettell is out of town."

Here was disappointment and ill-omen in the first words she heard. She turned to withdraw—but stood hesitating—her hand on the latch.

"I suppose," said the gentleman, "you wish to see Mr. Brettell on business?"

"Yes, sir."

"Perhaps I could manage it for you. I am Mr. Brettell's partner—and I shall be very happy to give you every information."

Amy turned about. "I have a letter, sir,

for Mr. Brettell. It is on business—and you may know something of it."

"If you will sit down, you can tell me."

Amy sat down, and held the letter hesitatingly in her hand.

"If the letter is on business, I can read it," said Mr. Goold. "Who is the letter from?"

"From Mr. Rochford."

"Oh! ha! Bless me!" and a shade of embarrassment and pain passed over Mr. Goold's quiet face. "You are his daughter?" he asked gently.

"Yes, sir."

"Poor girl! poor girl! Give me the letter. Let me see what is to be done."

Mr. Goold took the letter; opened it quickly and read it through. Then evidently read it through again. His face got doubtful. Amy watched him—intense anxiety written on her quivering lip.

"I heard something of this," he said slowly, "but I am much inclined to think your father made some mistake. I know there is some confusion about it. I think I heard Brettell say he had completed the transaction, and paid over the money. I have nothing to do with it. It was not one of the transactions of the firm. It was a commission Brettell took from your father, and I had no knowledge of it until after your father's——."

"Do you think, sir," asked Amy fearfully, "that if the money has not been paid, Mr. Brettell will pay it? I know he is not legally bound, but it is all the hope I have of supporting myself in London."

Mr. Goold looked at the pale face, uplifted to him, with such a quiet simplicity of fear in the appealing eyes, and he hesitated as he said,

"Why, my dear young lady, *I* cannot

say. I know that Brettell must pay it out of his private funds—the firm has nothing to do with it, and I don't think Brettell has much to spare now. I am sure he never thought of an application of this kind; it is so unusual, you see, under the circumstances."

Nothing more cheering or decisive could Amy extort from the quiet, placid Mr. Goold. She left the office with a sickened heart.

It seemed very odd to her to return to that strange, lonely little room, and to be forced to regard it has a home. It was strange to be obliged to sit there so long, severed so much from all her old associations, that she thought it an effort to recal the recollections of them. She had no books to read; nothing to do, but to sit opposite the window and watch the roof-tiles lighted by the declining sun. She did

not feel pain; but a dreary sense of spirit-weariness. Again came over her her old dreaming thought. Stand with her eyes still open she saw before her, not the confused chimneys and roofs of many houses, but another scene, far, far away; a home where she sat by Forsythe's side, both silently watching the sun sink into the sea. Where did that thought come from? It stood before her as distinct as a picture. With *him* came inseparably thoughts of a distant land—of a far sea-shore—of something severed from all the life she had known. But quickly, as often before, she dashed down the visionary picture, and looking round her saw nothing but the small room, meanly furnished.

CHAPTER XXV.

Two years have passed away.

In the tallest house of a long narrow lane in Islington; in a narrow, cheerful little room, up many pairs of stairs, Amy sat by a little couch. An old sofa had been covered by a tiny mattress, and a very white counterpane spread over the little bed, on which lay a young girl—a child of twelve or thirteen, who was playing with Amy's fingers and resting in quiet silence, a languid yet happy smile on the little lips.

There was an aspect of gradually returning health on the brow and cheeks; their clearness looked fresh and recent; and the retreating fever, like a fiery sunset, had left behind a faint roseate tint, which seemed to steal timidly into the cheeks, as if it feared being chased away by the pale flag that still shadowed the brow. The bed, on which the child lay, was so small and simple—the furniture around was so scant—the figure of the invalid lay so stirless—and Amy, in her little bonnet and coarse small shawl, sat so still, her large eyes fixed on the ground, that the room looked more like a picture than a reality. One might have almost entered the room and have scarce noticed the narrow couch —so neatly and unobstrusively was it placed on one side; and unless you could read Amy Rochford's heart, one might pass by and deem that not a passing thought

could be suggested by a scene so simple, as a convalescent child and a young work-girl sitting by.

"What are you thinking of, Miss Rochford?" asked the little girl, looking up.

"Of many things."

"You look as if you were about to cry. Has any one died. Are you sorry for any one?"

"No, Laura, I am like yourself—I have no one that I could be sorry for if they died. All my friends are dead or gone away."

The young girl partly raised herself in the bed, and looked keenly at Amy, while her little lip quivered as she asked:—"Have you no friends at all?"

Amy did not seem to hear the question.

"Oh! Miss Rochford, I thought I was very lonely and deserted; but you have been my friend; and you yourself have no

friend. If you got ill, what could I do for you? I wish you had some friend that, when you were ill, would watch by you as you watched by me; and always telling you something to make you bear pain better. *I* could watch by you—but then I am so weak—."

"But you will get stronger, Laura. When I am ill, I will have no nurse but you."

"I'd be glad to watch over you: but then, when awake at night and you would be asleep, I should have an awful fear of your death. But you never will die, I am sure. You look very sad sometimes; but whenever you speak to me, you speak so firm and so glad that I think you never could be ill. Were you ever ill, Miss Rochford?"

"Yes—often. Call me 'Amy.'"

"No—you are a lady; and I'm but a little work-girl."

"I am a work-girl like yourself."

"No—no. I heard Esther Bell say she knew you were a lady by your walk and accent. I heard them all say it when you went out of the work-room the first day. You are a lady—but you got poor—and you are obliged to work. Esther Bell told me so. I have another reason, too, for knowing it."

"No matter, Laura, what I was, I want you to be very fond of me; and you must call me Amy."

"I will, if you always talk that way and smile that way. I was lying awake last night when you thought me asleep; and you were kneeling for a long time at the bedside; and you were crying; and I could hear you praying, though I could scarcely hear the words, you cried so much. I was afraid to ask you why you were crying; but

I did not sleep for a long time. I do not care much to hear Esther Bell crying: I heard her crying one day when her mother died; but you cried as if you could not help it—as if your whole body was in pain —for you trembled, as if in cold; and I knew, though it was almost dark, that your cloak was off and your hands almost hid in your hair."

"I was not well last night, Laura; and I was very foolish. I should not have cried —for nothing had occurred. But I was thinking of a great many things; and before I could think on them all, or recollect anything clearly, the tears gushed out, and I could not stop them; though I did not know why I was weeping. You know, Laura, it is very weak to grieve, even if you have cause. It is of no good."

"Well, do not grieve again. I forgot—I had something to tell you. I was telling

you about the man who brought me in here when I fell in the street,"

"Yes!"

"Mrs. Leyne was with me yesterday, when you were away, and I asked her all about him—and she told me what she knew. After he had brought me in, in his arms, he called Mrs. Leyne, and told her that he had seen me stagger in the street and fall—that he had taken me up, and that I looked as if I had fever. That was the day, you know, that I left the work-room in the morning, ill—and had to walk to Mary Roberts's. This man then gave Mrs. Leyne two gold guineas, and told her to let me stay here, and that he would pay her—that I was the daughter of a farmer he knew in Sussex, and that he was a friend of my father's long ago. Are you heeding me, Miss Rochford?"

"Yes, Laura—yes."

"You look as if you were thinking of

something else. Well, he came yesterday, after Mrs. Leyne was talking to me—and Mrs. Leyne brought him to me, and I asked him about my father and mother, and he knew everything—and knew my name. He said he met me one day going out of the workroom, and that I was so like my mother he wanted to stop me, but I had run away in a hurry, not seeing him—and then he asked Esther Bell what was my name—and Esther Bell told him. Then he was sure—and the next time he met me, I was going home ill that day. Well, that's not all—but he told me another strange thing. He says he knows you—and that you lived at a place called Manordean, in Yorkshire, and that you were once very rich. He knew your father, too, he said—your father was a wine-merchant."

Amy raised her head, and said painfully, "Knew my father! What is the name of this—

this—how does he look—what is his name?"

"I do not know his name. He looks like any man—but he's tall, and dark in the face. He is not a gentleman, I think, but he is not a farmer, I'm sure. He speaks strangely, in a rough, queer voice."

"It is strange!" said Amy. "I do not know who he can be," and her voice fell with the last few words, and her large dark eye rested on the floor.

Little Laura looked chagrined and dispirited. "There now, Miss Rochford, you are again going to grieve. I thought you would be glad to hear that that man knew you."

"You are a good girl," said Amy, smiling and kissing her. "I'll never again grieve. I'll give it up after to-day. But I must go now for some hours—I'll be back before evening."

"Are you going to the work-room? If

you do I will never forgive you. You should never go there again, for that room would kill any one. I heard Lucy Morris whispering something about you, about your not being able to stand it long—and they were looking at you while you were working."

"I am not going to the workroom, Laura, I am going to Russell-square."

"Ah! to Dr. Mordan's. I heard you inquiring of Mrs. Leyne. You are not ill?"

"No, Laura."

"Are you about to be ill?"

"I do not know. Sleep now, and I'll be back before six."

"And perhaps the Doctor will prevent you getting ill," called out the child eagerly after her.

"Perhaps he will. Good bye, Laura."

"Good bye." and the child, as it murmured, "Darling Miss Rochford," sank back on the pillow.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was far advanced in the evening as Amy again turned down that little lane in Islington. Her step was slow and uncertain—her cloak was folded about her—and her head drooped down, as if no physical power sustained her. The heart within was heavy. Gladly would she now have won back the brief happiness of the past week. Then, her heart and hands were busied in thoughts and acts of sweet kindness; for the ready goodness of her young heart had

revived as she saw the youngest of her work-room companions helpless in illness. To hover about that small couch—to adjust, again and again, that restless pillow—and to watch the signs of convalescence with an eagerness that blotted out all other thought; this was happiness, for it occupied her fully—and the thought of once more having the power to bring joy revived within her the old buoyant feelings which had so often risen above the gloom of Melton, and had rushed in full tide to meet the glad beauty of the little Eskill. Who, watching her, busied in that little chamber, could think that sorrow, with its brutal daring, would ever touch that smooth brow and pleasant eyes, bent in lovingness over the suffering child—or that pain and weariness would ever make heavy that light elastic step.

It was past; the sunshine of needed kindnessess had ceased; and with strange bit-

terness came to her the distinct foreshadowing of a new sorrow. With strange bitterness; for why should she fear to die? She tried to say to herself that she grieved to leave Laura; the emphatic utterance of the heart could not be so belied. She felt that it was not the thoughts of Laura that so sickened her heart now. She was far from *him*. He might never hear of her death. She should be buried in some city grave-yard, and he might pass it by some day and never think of the heart that lay mouldering there.

With a faltering step she stopped opposite the door and lightly knocked. She scarce raised her head to notice who gave her entrance; but the landlady muttering an explanation, drew her gently into the little parlour and made her sit down.

"Was Laura telling you about her friend? Bless me! how pale you are;" continued

Mrs Leyne, as Amy raised her head. "Have you been at the doctor's, and what did he say ? "

"Nothing, nothing," said Amy, hurriedly. "What about Laura."

"About Laura's friend? He is here now, and he says he knows you. His name is Wilson."

"I do not know him."

"He says you never met him; but he would wish to speak to you a minute."

Mrs. Leyne left her alone in the parlour, and soon returned, followed by a stranger. He was tall, slightly made, awkward in gait, with large dark whiskers, and well marked eye-brows. He stood for a minute at the door, keenly regarding Amy, who looked up and saw a face she had never seen before. Mrs. Leyne retired.

"You wished to see me ?" asked Amy. "You can sit down."

"His very voice too!" said the stranger, in a low tone to himself; and then seated himself at a respectful distance.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he said awkwardly, "for troubling you; but the little girl above is the daughter of an old friend and neighbour of ours up the country, a good step from this. I found her out by chance. Her father and mother are dead—and once when I wanted food and shelter they gave it me, and I would not wish to see their daughter want for anything while I have a penny. You have been an angel to her, Miss Rochford, and you have saved her life. But I want, you see ma'am, to do something that the poor little thing need not go back to that work again—for she can't stand it. 'Tis killing work, I'm thinking, or she would not look so pale. I have been bold enough to speak to you, ma'am, because you would know

how to do something with any little money I could give her, and would put her in the way of earning her bread in comfort; but I have another reason for speaking to you. I beg your pardon for speaking of it—but I knew your father, ma'am—long ago. I was a seaman then; a hard, pleasant life it was, while it lasted, and until all kinds of trouble came at once; but I knew your father then, and was with him when he was wounded. My name is not Wilson, ma'am," he continued, lowering his voice. "I am bound to keep quiet ever since, for I had hard work to keep hid. My name is Irwin—perhaps you might have heard of it at the time."

"Irwin," said Amy, thoughtfully, "I have a faint recollection that one day I heard my father ask some one, 'was Irwin found yet?' and when they answered 'No,' he seemed glad. It is like a dream to me: for at that time—"

"Yes, ma'am. God bless you ma'am, don't speak of it now, or I'll never forgive myself. I saw you often at Manordean with your sister; and when I was hiding, I used to lurk about Melton, and often and often I saw you looking through the drawing-room windows watching for the messenger from L——. God bless you, Miss Amy, don't look so sorrowful. The old times were bad times: but things always get better—I know they do, ma'am."

"Were you often at Manordean?" asked Amy, assuming a cheerful tone and aspect.

"Yes, ma'am. Heaven help you, ma'am, if you would now and again flash out your eyes that way, you'd soon look as well as you did one evening I met you at Hendon —I was coming with a message to your father — and a gentleman was with you that I knew, and you were listening to him, looking so grand and quiet—and he was so

watchful that you should listen. You'll remember him, I think, ma'am—Mr. Forsythe."

Amy felt the blood steal to her brow as she answered "Yes."

Amy hesitated at the words, but said:—"You spoke of Mr. Forsythe, did you know him?"

"Know him! I loved him as I would a brother, though, of course, he was far above me. Ah! it was he that had the true heart and the generous hand."

"*Had*," shudderingly whispered Amy to herself. She paused, pressing her lips close and asked:—"Does Mr. Forsythe live now at L——?"

"Oh! bless you, no ma'am. He left the country some months before you left Manordean. The last time I saw Edward Forsythe, was as he stood on the deck of a Southampton ship, waving his hand to me,

while the other held the hand of the young girl, his wife that day."

"His wife!"

"He married one day in London, and he and his wife sailed for Jamaica the same day. God bless him! there is not a hair of his head I do not love. Wherever he is to-day, and whatever he does, will be what is good, and true, and noble. Heaven help us! Miss Amy, you look as if you would faint."

"No!" said Amy, standing up, and a sudden firmness lighting her eyes, and giving energy to her pressed lips. "I am quite well—quite well." And she looked so. "You can call to-morrow, and we will talk about Laura Jones. I am very busy to-day."

Amy once more, even in her coarse dress, and in that mean room, looked again the princess-like Amy Rochford, of Manordean; and Irwin sunk back abashed.

Awkwardly and embarrassed he took his leave.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Married! His *wife!* Like a sharp sword against her heart, came the picture that now rose up before her. The sea again—always the sea. This, then, was the sea of her dreams. The wide sea: the harbour; the familiar form of Forsythe on the deck of that slowly, heaving gradually, lessening ship; and by his side his young wife. She pressed her brow as she paced up and down the room. Married! She could not comprehend it; she could not

fully conceive it. "I must forget him." *Must!*

She forcibly pressed her small white hands against her throbbing brow. She could not quiet the pain. Her thoughts of about an hour before again rose! Her woman's cheek burned, and her woman's heart thrilled with shame, as she felt *how* she had thought of the Forsythe *now* before her, linked with that ship and that sea rising in her vision dark, painful, and encircling all. All was ended. She was then but a fond foolish girl, who had tortured a few kind words into love; and had cherished in her heart wild mad thoughts that never again could be indulged. Still she paced up and down the little room, speaking half-aloud, each word awakening an echo of agony in her heart. "I must subdue this, I suppose! It is well to talk thus! Subdue it! Yes, if I had

loved with the calm love that one reads of, but I loved him with heart and soul—every pulse of my heart was his—it was maddening to dream, and waking find that he was far, far away, and that I was alone to weep, the only thing a woman can do. I dream now of the power to bring him to my feet; and I dream still even now; he is at my feet, and with a word I sway his soul; I watch the love stealing in light to his eyes, and hear him speak once more in that tone I have got by heart so well."

She stood, and tried to banish his face and form from her vision; she could not succeed; he still looked into her eyes, and over his face was a painful shadow, such as it had worn that evening in the garden at Manordean. There came a glad thought! All would soon be over. On that very day she had been told by the physician that some incipient signs of con-

sumption had shown themselves; that if she could take change of air—specially remove to her native air—she had a prospect of recovery; but that stay in London would surely be fatal. As she had paced along the streets this sentence weighed as a dark pall over her spirits. The remedy pointed out was far beyond her means—she could not afford to leave London. And the very hope held out, linked as it was with the inability to avail herself of it, added to the bitterness of her fate. But now, the motive of life was gone, and although there lingered at her heart a shapeless wish to die in Manordean—near the Eskill—to look even once more on the old trees, and the favourite haunts, yet the thought of the hopelessness of this was a gentle sorrow compared with that great grief which now filled her heart.

She sat on the sofa for an hour calmer

than she thought she possibly could be. I am but a child yet, she thought; this comes as if it were a first grief. And it is a very common-place thing, too. I love one, whose very faults I can bless; whose heart is ever beating in time to my own, as I think; and I am never to see him again—and should never think of him again. This very day I did think of him—I pictured myself his wife—now the thought is sinful. Yet—yet—I was almost about to think that if I had not been told it were sinful I should gladly cherish it. A sin! Can it be a sin to be generous and to love—to wish to feel that another's heart is throbbing gladly. But then, *his wife!*

She struggled long and then calmed down her bitterest thought—the thought of that other intrusive form, which in its inoffensiveness but maddened her the more. She began to wonder had Forsythe loved

her; had he felt love on that evening at Manordean—when his thoughts of kindred feelings seemed as intelligible to her as the plainest words of endearment. Could she be mistaken? Had her own heart betrayed her? It could not be. Again and again she uttered—"He loved me! I felt it!"

Gradually her spirit returned from its wild wanderings to the circumstances of her daily life. She was alone, she thought, an orphan girl unprotected. This, truly, was but a simple story. For the first time the tears slowly filled her eyes; and as, without impatience, she wiped them away, she felt relieved. She seemed to hear a voice saying to her, "Come, Amy, suffer and be still—soon all will be over, and your throbbing heart will rest; and you will be laid gently to sleep on a pillow, where no wild dreams of love will ever come—and the aching of the brow, and the

pain gnawing at the heart shall be over." The thought stilled her sorrow. She wiped away the tears again; and standing up, arranged her hair and dress in the little mirror over the mantle-piece. Laura must not see me grieve, she quickly thought. She was surprised at her own calmness and peace in thinking of everything so clearly; in so carefully putting aside her long ringlets, and placing her bonnet in its exactly proper position, and tying the ribbons just as they should be. Her eyes bore still some traces of the tears. She waited for a few minutes, and walked to the window. Some people were passing; and she could allow her thoughts to wander to their faces. She again stepped towards the mirror; passed the little table, and took up a book lying there. She read the title dreamily; bnt her thoughts went no further than the words. They included not the

meaning. Those things formed a foreground of figures on which her thoughts dreamily rested, in preference to lifting her eyes to the for horizin, where she felt there was some strange shape of sorrow—some indistinct figure of pain looking down on her with large mournful eyes, sad and piercing.

"Well, Laura, have you been lonely?"

"Yes; but I was always thinking of what you would say to me, or what I should say to you when you should come; and that kept me quiet."

"And what have you to say to me?"

"I cannnot think now; but if you sit down quietly by the bed, and let me hold your hand, and then go on talking, saying anything, I'll think of many thing. There now; just rest your arm that way on the couch, and let your hand lie quiet, so that I

can do what I please with it. You are glad at something, I think. You are not smiling; but you are thinking of something far, far away—something, too, that you are glad of."

"I was thinking of some one far, far away."

"And do you love him?"

"No."

"Why?—You are crying!"

"No, my eyes are quite dry. I am not unhappy, Laura. I never will be unhappy again. Nothing now would make me grieve."

"If I died would you grieve for me?"

"No, Laura."

The child did not speak again, but lay silent—the tears gushing from its eyes; and Amy sat by without speaking. For many minutes she did not heed Laura's grief; but then, as if with a sudden impulse, she twined her arms round the little

neck and covered the brow and lips with kisses.

Oh! I forgot exclaimed Laura—"I have something for you," and she took a letter from under the pillow.

"A letter," said Amy rather surprised. She turned it towards the window; it had the Manordean postmark—surely she knew the hand—yes it must be from Merle Graydon. She opened it quickly.

"*My dear Amy,—I wrote to Mary for your address, and have just received it. I am to start for London to-morrow to place Georgy at school at Richmond. His Uncle William defrays all the expenses, and though my poor father who gets weaker every day, is very sorry to part with Georgy, yet we cannot refuse so good an offer. I am to stop at Mary's place one night, (I will bring you a description of your little niece,) and she has a large parcel for you, to be entrusted to me.*

Georgy is quite wild with delight at the thought of seeing you again. I need only say, I hope, how glad I shall be to have a long talk with you about old times.

My present superior resigns next month, and I then obtain the head agency, as I suppose Mary has told you.

Your ever affectionate Cousin,

MERLE GRAYDON.

After the sharp pain of the tidings she had just heard, this letter and the event it heralded were very grateful to her. She felt such a gush of warm family feeling for them all—for Mary, for the unknown little niece, for Georgy Graydon, and for honest, kind, true-hearted Merle Graydon himself. A faint suspicion crossed her thought that Merle might renew his offer; the last sentence of his letter was suggestive; but she said quietly, "I hope not, poor fellow," and then fell into a reverie of thought so

deep that Laura had to call her three times ere she was brought back to the present.

"We shall have tea here, Laura."

"Oh! that will be so nice," and Laura clapped her hands.

The tea in the bedroom was a great novelty, a grand privilege, for Laura;—and the two seemed happy for the evening. Amy very quiet all through, and sometimes too thoughtful; but Laura chattering away almost without ceasing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the day that Merle Graydon was to arrive Amy gave up her work and devoted herself, with an energy no rich master ever required nor hired servant ever gave, to the task of beautifying her little palrour. It was the front parlour and was very small, and the furniture was not rich or gay; but it is a miracle, to those who do not actually look into the matter, what wonders in the way of pleasant adorning in a room a woman of taste can effect at

a very small expense, and how this adorning gives the effect of completeness and even richness which an expensive purchase could not supply. To describe the details would not do justice, for the beauty of this kind of work lies entirely in the effect, and most minds inevitably think meanly of things of little cost. Let us leave to the vulgar mind the coarse rejoicing at their solid costly drawing-room furniture; let us think with joy of those dear little rooms where sweet loved hands have, with the most trifling materials, and for a few shillings, brought light and beauty before the eye.

Some things in her little parlour were not pleasant to Amy, and she wished them away. The side-board was a dark ungainly piece of wood-work, and she gave a little sigh thinking of it; but that was of no use. The summer cur-

tains were her own, and under the crimson damask they looked, she thought, so pretty, that she several times went into the hall and came in suddenly to try if she could perceive how they struck a strange eye at entering. Finally, and after great exertions her work was done; all her tasks and troubles were conquered by Amy with invincible good humour, and she felt easy in her mind, though a little flushed when seven o'clock drew near —the hour that Merle Graydon, in a second letter, had fixed to call.

"Georgy, my dear boy, what a big fellow you are; such a little man."

Amy kissed him and held out her hand to Merle. He could not speak, but looked very keenly at her,—as if to trace any change in her appearance.

"Dont scrutinise me so—I am very well,

although a little thin. You can't expect me to be as fat and rosy as your Yorkshire lasses, can you?"

"I wish you were in Yorkshire once more."

"So I shall be some day. Sit down, Merle; and Georgy, here is a young lady wants to be introduced to you."

Little Laura coloured up, and Georgy shook hands with her with that ungallant carelessness which boys of ten or twelve always show to young ladies about their own age.

While Amy made tea, Merle described "Mary's place" and the little niece, but broke down in his information when questioned as to the colour of the baby's eyes; as to Manordean, Georgy was by far the best informant.

"Farmer Stokes's grey horse is dead, Amy," said he after one pause.

Amy did not laugh, but went on asking questions.

"Was Mary Jordan married yet?"

Georgy did not know—no he thought not; but then Charley Jordan had got a nice little pony for his uncle.

"Lizzie Pennant told me to give her love to you, Amy," said Georgy.

"Are she and young Lewis still engaged?" asked Amy of Merle.

Merle did not know—he had not met the Pennants for a long time. He had been so busy and his father had been so unwell he had scarcely got out anywhere.

"Lewis was with her when I saw her on Monday," put in Georgy, "and they pass our place walking together nearly every evening."

So the evening passed on until, according to a pre-arrangement, the landlady, who had heard a good deal about the coming

Georgy, came to tempt him and Laura to her own little parlour, where there there was an array of picture books, a piano, and a small supper by way of surprise.

Almost as the door closed after them Amy felt her heart go a little quicker. Merle seemed quite calm, and he was silent looking into the fire for a few minutes, he then said, "Amy, this will never do, you know."

She looked up. "How? what do you mean?"

"This life you lead here in London. There is no necessity. Mary has told me that she and Unthank have frequently asked you to come to them; besides there is my father, he is not a near relation but he has some right to love you. You were always his favourite, and you know that to his house you would be always welcome."

Amy shook her head.

Merle looked at her and said, "You do not look well; this work is slowly killing you."

"Not at all!" rejoined Amy cheerfully. "I do not work very hard, very little supports me; besides I am a very shameful person, for I have borrowed thirty pounds, in small sums, from Mary, so do not run away with the idea," she went on, with one of her old smiles, "that I am a romantic independent girl who refuses all help from her friends."

"But why not go to live with Mary?"

"That is a different thing. Unthank is not rich, and before his marriage he and I could never agree. Why should I be a burthen to him when I can support myself in London?"

"Yes! but without many things you

ought to have," and he half unconsciously looked round the room.

"Oh! if you begin to criticise my parlour I give you up—that is unmannerly. Wait for a few months, then come and see me, and you shall see a pretty little room."

"It is very pretty now; still——"

Amy was sitting at one side of the fire in one arm chair, the little round table had been pushed back and the fire-light glowed upon her left cheek. She was dressed in a very simple drab-coloured dress, with a bow of rose-coloured ribbon at the breast. The little lace cuffs that peeped out beneath the sleeves came into neat contrast with the round wrist swelling into the well-shaped hand—not white, but of a healthy flesh tint.

Merle Graydon looked at her steadily.

"Amy, I am about to do, perhaps, a very foolish thing. Will you forgive me if I give you annoyance?"

She bent down her head and tried to speak, but really could not.

"You remember it is nearly a year and a half ago since I asked you to become my wife. I had thought of it long before, and your father's misfortune forced me to speak of it before I intended, Then, you could not love me. It was very bitter to me, and I do not think anyone ever felt such unmixed sorrow as I did that night. But even the bitterest pain must give way before a man's doing work. I was obliged to go on; but I never was alone in my own room at night without praying to God to love and bless you."

Amy wished she was out of the room; she wished herself anywhere away from that pleading voice and honest face that seemed gradually conquering her. Was the past all a dream?

"Shortly after you left Manordean," con-

tinued Merle, "I heard it said (I never sought the information, and I only heard it surmised) that you had loved another. God knows I never suspected it, or I would not have vexed you by talking to you of my unfortunate feelings."

Amy hoped that her cheek was not very red; it certainly felt quite hot.

"I have not the least right to ask you any questions; but I have an idea—perhaps I may be wrong—that the past is past—is dead. Let us forget everything but what we feel now. You do not love me—I know you do not; but I love you more than life. I have always loved you. I think you could be happy, because it is your nature to make other people happy, and you could make me happy for ever."

He came across to her and sat down in the chair by her side.

"Amy, do not despise or dislike me

because I am not up to your ideal of what your lover should be. Why not try to love me? Even if you only loved me a little, should you not be better at Manordean—at the dear old village—than here amongst strangers?"

He took her unresisting hand and looked into her eyes for an answer.

She lifted up her eyes, gave him one perplexed look, and then cast them down again. She could hardly be said to think: a tumult of feelings agitated her. That she liked him warmly—had a free full fond affection for him—she knew; and yet there was a kind of inward nervous irritation as took her hand: an impression shaping itself in the sudden wish—almost ludicrous to herself—that she might love him if he would only stay at the other side of the table.

He was silent trying to read or guess her

thoughts; but he could not. At length she said,

"I do not know what to say, Merle. I am so sorry—so very sorry—even to think of giving you pain. I wish I could force myself to act for my own good—but"—she stopped and said abruptly "I cannot think if you look so close into my face—you confuse me;" and her cheeks crimsoned.

He drew back a little—gave a very faint smile—but did not speak.

The silence embarrassed her, and she started up saying—"Wait a few minutes." She left the room, and ran up stairs to her little bed-room—locking herself in. She flung herself on her knees by the bedside, and bursting out with the words "God direct me," she found some relief in the warm tears that came stealing down her cheeks.

After living so long in London amongst strangers, the home feelings, home talk, and

home thoughts had been very welcome and delightful to her. It was pleasant to have Georgy and Merle at her little tea table—always so lonely; and there had been a wholesome excitement in the novelty of finding herself one of the family. To be so loved by Georgy and Laura Jones, to find that Merle had such an interest in her, to hear messages from Mary and news of her baby, came in such contrast to the lonely evenings that had been her lot for nearly two years, that she felt almost a new being. On a heart thus revived and freshened came the honest, manly, truthful love of her cousin.

Amy could not help feeling that she liked to be loved by him, liked him to speak frankly and affectionately, to call her "Amy," and that she would like to be of use to him or to add to his happiness; and yet she did *not* like the thought

of marrying him. She could not tell why. She liked him; but she felt that it would take a long time to reconcile herself to the idea of being his wife. If, she thought to herself, husbands and wives were always like husbands and wives in plays and books, where they only sit and talk together, sometimes have little differences and "make it up," then I could bear it; or, thought Amy, smiling to herself through her tears, if he would always stay at the other side of the table. Beyond all this was something she tried to consider as put out of her thoughts. But it was still always present in the background of the picture, and it never left the sight of her "mind's eye." She thought what would be her feelings if *he*, instead of Merle Graydon, were now in the little parlour waiting for her answer. Ah! if that were possible.

And bitter painful sobs shook her litte body as she pressed her face deep into the bed and tried to stifle the rush of hot tears. The thought came sudden across her heart, like a spasm of physical pain, "Oh! that I might die now!" she exclaimed with hoarse utterance. She felt that sharp aching pain of despair never felt so intensely as by a woman who has for ever lost the man she has loved. People try to represent such grief as this by comparing it to physical pain, but the comparison is weak. There is no physical pain, thank God, which does not afford the hope of ending—but a young heart cut off for ever from what it has intently loved, is impressed for the time with the belief that the grief is for ever. We who are middle-aged and have survived those things, (no one now-a-days is young,) know that such sorrow does not last, and we can smile at

the extravagance of the sorrow—but the mourner knows not of such experiences, and her delusion is not the less real in pain that it is a delusion. There is another excuse to be made for Amy Rochford. While in London, she had been really alone. She found no fitting associates, she had no friend save her child-friend, and her thoughts of Forsythe were unspoken, and all the more cherished. Her imagination brooded over them until they acquired almost a morbid excess. She scarcely ever ceased to think of him, and when the sudden shock of the news of his marriage came, it smote on her heart with a force that might have almost proved fatal, had she not been suddenly obliged to think of other things, in preparing to receive her cousins.

When she became a little calmer, she got up from her knees and lighted a candle. She dried her eyes, smoothed her hair, and

then sat down to think. She contrasted her thoughts of Merle Graydon with the thoughts of Forsythe—and thought calmly and honestly, that it would be a wrong to Merle Graydon to give him a wife who could cry at the grief of not being married to another. She did not say to herself that the time might come when she could marry him, nor did she think that her present thoughts of Forsythe could not be conquered, for she had a feeling that they might finally be overcome.

When she came to the room, Merle was sitting in front of the fire, his head between his hands and gazing into the coals.

He started up. She gave him her hand and said at once :—

"Merle, do not ask me to give you any answer; I shall always love you as a cousin."

He saw in her face that it was useless for him to speak any more.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Merle Graydon left London the next day.

On the two following days Amy went as usual to the workroom, in the city, and worked with increased assiduity. She did not wish to look into the future—she gladly allowed a cloud to rest on the events to come; it was a relief to her not to think. Working hour after hour, she bent down her mind to the drudgery of the toil; and forced herself down to think that the cor-

rectness of stitch-work and the exactness of her finished embroidery were the most important things in life—things of moment, on which her heart was really bent. Her effort partially succeeded. The other events of her life began to fade from the view; for resolutely she looked not at them. She knew that many of her companions had passed through lives monotonously chequered by toil and necessity—necessity and toil—that their thoughts but wandered from the workroom to the little garret, and from the garret to the workroom; and she made a partially successful effort to look on her own life as one not more remarkable than theirs. "I, too, am but a work-girl. When Mrs. Smith is paying us on Saturday, she sees inin me but one of her work-women. I, too, must learn to regard my life in its true light."

There came to her thus for a day a joyless

peace—a hard, dry content—no refreshing feeling—and no cutting pain; but an absence of the play of thought which brings sunshine and shadow over the soul. Each day, she walked from Islington where she now stopped far into the city, toiled there until five, and then trod the way back to meet Laura at the door of the room. How proud Laura was one day to be able to totter down stairs for the first since her illness, and, with a sweet smile, open the door as Amy knocked; it made Amy glad for the evening to think how happy she could make the child. Irwin had called once more, but had only left a letter enclosing money sufficient to pay Mrs. Leyne; and the clumsy rough note referred, in some awkward phrases, to his intention of calling again with more in a few days. Amy was anxious to see Irwin again; to secure him as a protector for Laura; and to con-

sult him as to the future interests of her little friend. But Irwin remained away for nearly a week. Amy could not help getting impatient. She did not know Irwin's address. She longed, too, to find for Laura a protector, for she felt more by presentment than actual pain, that the insidious disease which threatened her still progressed in its dread course. Then came to her, longing thoughts of the protecting umbrage of the Hendon trees—the rippling of the little Eskill—the secluded shadows of Manordean; and could she have done it, see would have walked there—mile after mile, day after day—so that at length, unnoticed by any, she might look once more on the few places there she loved as if they could feel her love—and then die alone, expressing not even by one word, the feeling of her life—silently crushing all thought within her heart.

It was about ten days after she had first seen Irwin, and her mind was more than usually occupied with the thoughts of Laura, as she walked to the work-room taking, by choice, some of the unfrequented bye-lanes of the city. As usual, she walked quickly along, her eyes fixed on the ground, her face unseen, her small foot alone looking incongrouous associated with the mean dress and the coarse cloak. Her thoughts occupied her; and she scarce noticed the occasional passers by, until a voice near her sent the blood to her cheek, and made her check her step as if a bullet had pierced her heart. She well knew that voice, and as if it were a picture, there was Forsythe before her. Her eyes shot out one quick observing glance. An hour of in spection was crowded into that moment. He was unchanged, not a line of his features had altered. His gait was more

stooped than it had been; but the blue eyes, straight nose, and heavy mouth were still the same. He was leaning on the arm of a younger man, and both stood looking into a book-shop, while Forsythe had uttered a few words. In those few words came to Amy all the past. It is hard to cheat the torn heart. This Forsythe she had loved was not then a dream or a picture, sometimes to be placed before her, and sometimes resolutely veiled—he was a reality. He lived! had form and face and substance, still spoke in that old voice, and still looked the old thoughts; but the voice now spoke to another, and the thoughts gleamed not for her in the lighted language of those deep blue eyes. She had passed him far, far, with a quick hurried step, before she could crowd these thoughts into her heart.

She could not well work that day. She

had miscalculated her strength. If he would but stay away, if she should never see him more, she would regain calmness; but she shuddered at the prospect of seeing his face, and hearing his voice in her ears —each look and tone reviving afresh each forbidden thought. With confused visions of Forsythe's words, tones, and aspect, should he ever meet and know her, she hurried back to Islington that evening, passing, by choice,—which she cheated her heart into thinking accidental,—the very spot where she had met him that day, and glancing fearfully at the book-shop window as if she expected to see him there again.

A new surprise awaited her at home. There was a letter (which Laura triumphantly held up from the parlour window, as Amy passed it before knocking). It was in a strange hand. Amy opened it, and found it a short business-like note

from Mr. Brettell, saying that some recent examinations of his accounts led him to believe that his debt to Mr. Rochford was but partially paid, and that he enclosed a cheque for fifty pounds, which he was inclined to think fully liquidated the obligation. Amy read it over and over again, and then kissed Laura. "Now, Laura, I will show you Manordean; and you shall get strong in a few weeks; and I'll show you my oak tree and the little bridge."

"And the river, and the walk up the hill," exclaimed Laura, who knew every spot on Manordean from Amy's pictures of it, given on the summer evenings, when long stories were intermingled with recollections of the little village.

"It comes like a blessing," thought Amy. "Now I can leave London, and be far from all distracting thoughts, and once more hear that little river flowing on, and watch that

sweet sunset, seen from Hendon, and those evening clouds, nowhere so golden or so beautifully grouped, as over Manordean."

She did not go to the work-room the next day; but busied herself in buying presents for Laura, and in inquiring when the coach would start. Fifty pounds was a fortune. It would never be exhausted in such a country place as Manordean. "I will not stop at Manordean," thought she. "I'll have one little room for Laura and myself in that tiny cottage up on Hendon, with the little meadow on the streamlet. and we will never go into Manordean; but every evening we can take long walks up the height, and lose ourselves in the wood, and return to take tea in the little summer house in the meadow. It will be such a quiet life. I may die there. Now, death or life is the same. I must fly from *him*. While at Manordean I never will look even

once at the walks where he and I walked; but I'll find out new walks, and new places to love. But there is one thing I cannot give up, even though it will remind me of him—my little river! That clear rippling little flood will drown my bitter thoughts, and will sing always some new song of something good to come."

The energy with which she executed her intentions brought surprise to Amy. Everything was arranged in a few days. Laura's eyes gleamed like stars, as every hour brought the hour of departure near; and Amy, herself, sometimes found herself strangely forgetting herself why she fled from the city—why she wished to look on Manordean once more — and the fate that she had foreshadowed for herself awaiting her on some day, now not far distant.

CHAPTER XXX.

It was a summer evening, on which the cool air was a luxury after the intense heat of the day. Laura was asleep—lulled to rest on the bed-room sofa; and Amy had taken one glance at the blue eyes faintly circled beneath the lids, and had smoothed back the glossy ringlets from the forehead, and then placed a large shawl over the little sleeper, well tired with the amusement of the day. Amy wrapped a shawl about her head, and gently opening the door, was in

the little meadow; and in a few seconds sat on a little bench, beneath a tall fir, and heard the little Eskill race on to Manordean. For she was once again amid the haunts of her childhood—the sweet places which her bouyant heart had made scenes of enchantment. Manordean with its one spire and many chimnies—its shadowed porches—its scattered cottages—was there before her. There was Mrs. Smith's tall cottage; Mr. Malcolmson's long irregular mansion. There was Lizzie Pennant's walk, and there was the long lane that led off to the shool-house. There was Mr. Jordan's house at her feet, and there was the garden—she would not look at that. A soft mellow gorgeous light from the declining sun cast broad beams over field and cottage, sometimes left the Eskill in shade, and sometimes transmuted its wavelets into liquid light. There rose to Amy's lips a smile of

sadness, as she remembered all her many dreams of this Manordean: and for a moment her lip quivered, as if the sorrow mastered it; but she looked steadily at the beauty before her. The pain pierced her not; like a quiet lake, her soul was still, though one gentle sorrow rippled the surface.

The hour of musing is past; an hour of trial is come. It seemed to her like magic! The thought that he was near rushed upon her! Was it but a fancy? or was there really a step on the path from the house? Was she dreaming? or did that step but feign the sound of the well-remembered foot-fall? She sat breathless; and in a few seconds she knew he was at her side.

She compressed her moving lips and clenched her hands, as if to collect her strength. She rose, turned about, and met his eyes. They stood face to face, and even

for some seconds the mutual glances fully encountered. On Forsythe's eyes were written pain and trembling. Amy's steady glance was cold, unmoved.

"Mr. Forsythe?" she uttered, with a common-place tone of questioning, while she advanced not a step.

He seemed not to notice her coldness, but advanced towards her. "I heard in London," he said "that you were here. Mr. Brettell directed me to your Islington lodgings; and from Mrs. Leyne I heard that you had come to Manordean. I have heard of your being ill; you look ill now; but this air is powerful for recovery. It is your native air, too."

His voice and manner were so singularly familiar to her, that to Amy it seemed as if he were again but the Forsythe of the old time in Manordean, and that the later years of her own life were but some shadow.

His voice and face alone seemed real. She re-seated herself on the bank, and said coldly:—

"I was recommended by a physician to try the effect of my native air. I left London last week. Have *you* been long at Manordean, Mr. Forsythe?"

"I came last evening."

"Do you find the village much changed? I have not visited it yet. I have lived entirely alone—save one little companion—and there are too many old acquaintances, and too few friends in the village to make me like it."

Forsythe was silent. He could well trace the tone of her thoughts as she spoke thus coldly and fluently. She wished to parry off all memories of the past—all thoughts of the present—but those arising from every-day palpable events. He was to be henceforth but "Mr. Forsythe"—not the

Forsythe he had once been, when he could sway her soul with his voice, and give her thoughts utterance before she had shaped them.

He was silent for a long time; and spite of herself she was slightly awed. She prepared two or three times to re-commence the conversation, but the words would not come out. At length she yielded and sat silent; while he, with his downcast brow and hidden eyes, stood leaning against the tree at the front of which she sat. He began to speak deliberately:—

"I have much to say to you. But first, you feel—I know you must feel—that I do not address you as an ordinary acquaintance; that thoughts have been cherished in both our hearts that forbid us to meet coldly or calmly. I cannot stoop to the hypocrisy of addressing you as Miss Rochford. You know I would belie my thoughts

did I speak to you as if now were the first time I laid bare my heart."

Amy's eyes were not lifted to his—but they were turned towards him as she spoke: "I bear a distinct recollection, Mr. Forsythe, of having met you before; of having had much esteem and respect for you; and I have now no cause to have that respect lessened. But you sadly mistake me when you speak of thoughts or feelings other than those which I would entertain for any valued acquaintance. As to calling me Miss Rochford, I feel that my station in life has been lowered——"

"Amy!"——

"But I have not sought this interview—and I wish only to be alone. You have spoken, or you are about to speak, what I should not hear—what you should not say. If you cannot respect me, there are others

who have a claim that forbid you to speak again as you have done."

"Others! You mistake. I know to what you allude. I am free! If I leave this evening without hearing you say what I came so many miles to hear, there is no human being bound to my existance. I go forth alone—alone in heart and in hand. The past is over. There did stand between me and this hour—between me and the thoughts I would now speak to you, one who now lies in the quiet grave of a foreign land."

He went on: — "I can read your thoughts even through the marble veil of these rigid features. I came here to tell you the story of my life: and I must tell it, though your thoughts try to mutter, "This is but the insolence of vanity." You know it is not. Your heart has a voice vindicating me, and you can

hear it. You are still unmoved. I am not deterred. I expected this. Life must have its doubts; and this doubt of your love which now faintly stirs within me is one; but I crush it down until I have told you this story."

"It seems but as yesterday that I was a boy of twenty, Each year that had passed over my head brought with it a fresh spirit of fiery impatience—a daring heart which longed to act the wildest thoughts. I was an orphan, but with an ample fortune, and many friends. Life, with all its pleasures, was within my grasp; but for a brief time there was one circle of thought and feeling that included all. I loved! To love and to be beloved was to me the story of life, written briefly, and in letters of fire. I loved her as I loved the sun; I never thought of it; I would as soon thought of passing a flower and regarding it not, as

not loving her. She could not but love me; I was her superior in intellect, in soul, in birth, rank, wealth—in all but heart. One impulse of her generous heart outweighed any mental power; one life-pulse of love throbbing in her veins was worth a world of intellect. Every feeling she had was in itself a simple power; her impulse out-stripped thought; she acted while others dreamed. She might have been a heroine —she was but a peasant girl who loved me. We loved and forgot all else. To me it seems now one brief hot dream of passion. Even now I can scarce think calmly on it. It was the reign of impulse, of hours and acts such as can never be looked on coldly. A fire surrounded them; and I might as well, when in a fever have tried to count the pulse when at its height, as think calmly on deeds glowing with a fire that wrapped the soul in the en-

trancing torture of the senses. These are vague words for a common-place story. I a gentleman in rank and education loved a peasant girl; and then—loved her not. It is a coarse tale, often told. And it may seem brutal that I should assail your shrinking ear and crimsoned cheek with a passage of life so foreign to your pure thoughts and maiden heart; but I must go on.

"I awoke from a fiery dream to watch lips that trembled to my kiss, and yet spoke but to jar my ear. She was beautiful; but she was a peasant girl. I spoke to her what I thought. She understood not the ill-expressed promptings of a grasping intellect and thirsting heart; her education extended but to one thought. I was all to her because she could love none other. The dependence wearied me. She was restless, fretted, sad, when I was absent; glad and hopeful when I sat by her

side. My means of bestowing gladness were scarce exercised; my task was too light—I could give happiness by a word. She could not please me; she could not feel as I felt. The native energy and truth of her character which once won and subdued me, and which I can now appreciate, then seemed but coarse vigor and idiot simplicity. Around her was an atmosphere of sickening satiety. Associated with her was my degradation; for I, who had resource in intellect, had sunk to her level of one of impulse—the impulse of passionate love. I treated her brutally; I did not use one harsh word, but my coldness and capricious distrust were to her, brutality worse than the rack. I fled from her; I left for ever my birth-place. I left the south of England. I assumed, on pretence of a legacy, my mother's name. I severed myself from all who had known me. I pur-

sued my profession in London; but a celebrity I sought not marked me out. I fled from London, too. I came to L——, and abandoned my profession.

"My story is nearly ended. You have heard—your lips have not moved. You have sat there as motionless as if I had not spoken. It is well; it is fitting. I came to Manordean one evening, impelled by a restless spirit. I saw you—I spoke to you. I have sometimes the power, and sometimes it is a curse, of reading hearts. I read your's. I loved you as one would love a spirit. I felt destined to love you. I struggled with it; I wished not to love you. The Past held out a hand forbidding, fiercely-moved. I trembled as that hand waved between me and you. I dared all—I revelled in the thoughts of your love. My heart and soul centred in you; you were all to me. I have thought on you

when the night gathered deeper and deeper around. I have thought on you as sitting by my side—your hand clasped in mine—your eyes raised to mine—your form pressed to mine—and your voice more beautiful as it told me I was loved. I had thought my heart withered—my soul dead within me. Those thoughts came like new life. I was a child in loving you. The rustle of your dress made my heart leap; a light word from you, spoken to another, echoed to me as though it were music; your light step, as you moved before me, mingled in my dreams like a vision. I had no thought but you, no one who could love me, who could feel that a heart torn by one fault, one damning falsehood, thirsted, with a helpless cry, for some pure sustaining sympathy. You turn away; be it so. I have not yet done.

"That feeling never passed away; but re-

tribution came. When I joined your father in London I was traced by this poor girl I spoke of. She came, as she told me since, "to see me once more and die." She looked like death. She had no beauty now to raise my hatred, in contrast with the want of elegance; and if her voice still retained the *patios* of the peasant it was but weak and broken, and seemed as if it would soon cease for ever. I met her but by chance. For once I acted instead of dreamed. An impulse swayed me. The oath of my youthful love was rèdeemed I had wronged her by turning from her as a weapon against her happiness; I had forgotten God, virtue, truth, and honour; in part I redeemed my sin. She became my wife. We lived abroad. She died more than a year ago.

"I returned to this country some weeks ago. I sought you here. I traced you in

London—having made inquiries, happily of those who knew your father; I heard of your poverty—your struggles. I had some strange fear you might not wish me to see your necessity, and I felt that as yet I had no right to aid you directly. I procured aid through Mr. Brettel, and disguised it. I expected you would stay in London; but when I heard of your leaving for Manordean, my hopes rose; I said, 'She has not forgotten the scenes we saw and loved together.' For years I crushed down my thoughts of you, as one might bury a treasure, hoping one day to regain it. That day has come. There lies, far away now, mouldering to dust, a trusting heart I wounded and tried to heal; I come with a heart well-nigh crushed beneath the load of loneliness and pain—and I ask you—you alone, to tell me I am forgiven.

He stopped. She sat with her face turn-

ed away. The features were still fixed; but down her cheeks the tears flowed fast.

"Amy, will you not speak? Have you no thought that I may hear? Has this heavy tale of sin and sorrow turned your love to hate?"

She did not turn towards him, but she spoke with an effort at firmness: — "I need not speak of what I felt long ago. You have told me your thoughts, and did you need, I should not be ashamed to tell you every feeling I ever had towards you. I say this now fearlessly, because we shall, in all likelihood, never meet again."

Forsythe did not speak, but as he watched her unchanging cheek, and heard the rigid tone, he grew deadly pale. She went on:—

"Everything is changed. No thought I ever had remains to me now the same. There is a gulf between you and me. I

cannot pass it; I have a sickening fear on my heart. You are not the same companion that lived in my thoughts these years past; you seem a stranger. I think it strange that you should have thus spoken, and that I should have thus heard; but it matters not now—I condemn you not. I could not condemn you if I would, but—I cannot speak——"

She shuddered, and with head still averted, and cheek pale and trembling—she rose.

He stood before her, and grasped her arm, exclaiming in a flood of utterance, like one cry of pain, "For God's sake, hear me! Can you coldly pass me by? Can you leave me? and tell me to turn again to the sickening path of the world? My life is on your lips. Have I cried in prayer and agony to God to send me this hour, that I might see you face to face—and look

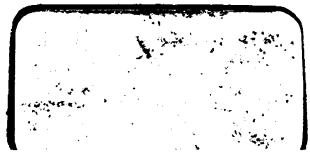
into those eyes, and ask you to be my wife —and has the hour come—and is it thus—thus we meet?" He paused, and then said, "My hour of trial has come; I must suffer alone." The voice grew fainter. "My hand is weak, too. Yes, Amy, you can shake it off without much effort. A stranger! You can say that and look on *that* walk and *that* sunset!"

She shook like an aspen, and gave one impulsive glance at the sunset. It brought back every loving thought that ever stirred within her, and with a cry of long-repressed feeling from an over-burdened heart, she buried her face in her hands, through which the tears flowed fast.

"Amy, my own Amy, will you forgive me? Can you still love me? Darling Amy! speak one word!"

His arm encircled her — and she sank upon his shoulder. Her heart was too full

to speak, and all around was forgotten save that her day-dream was realized, and that not in vision, but in reality her throbbing brow rested on his breast, and that sunset they both loved so well looked upon their betrothal.

THE END.

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